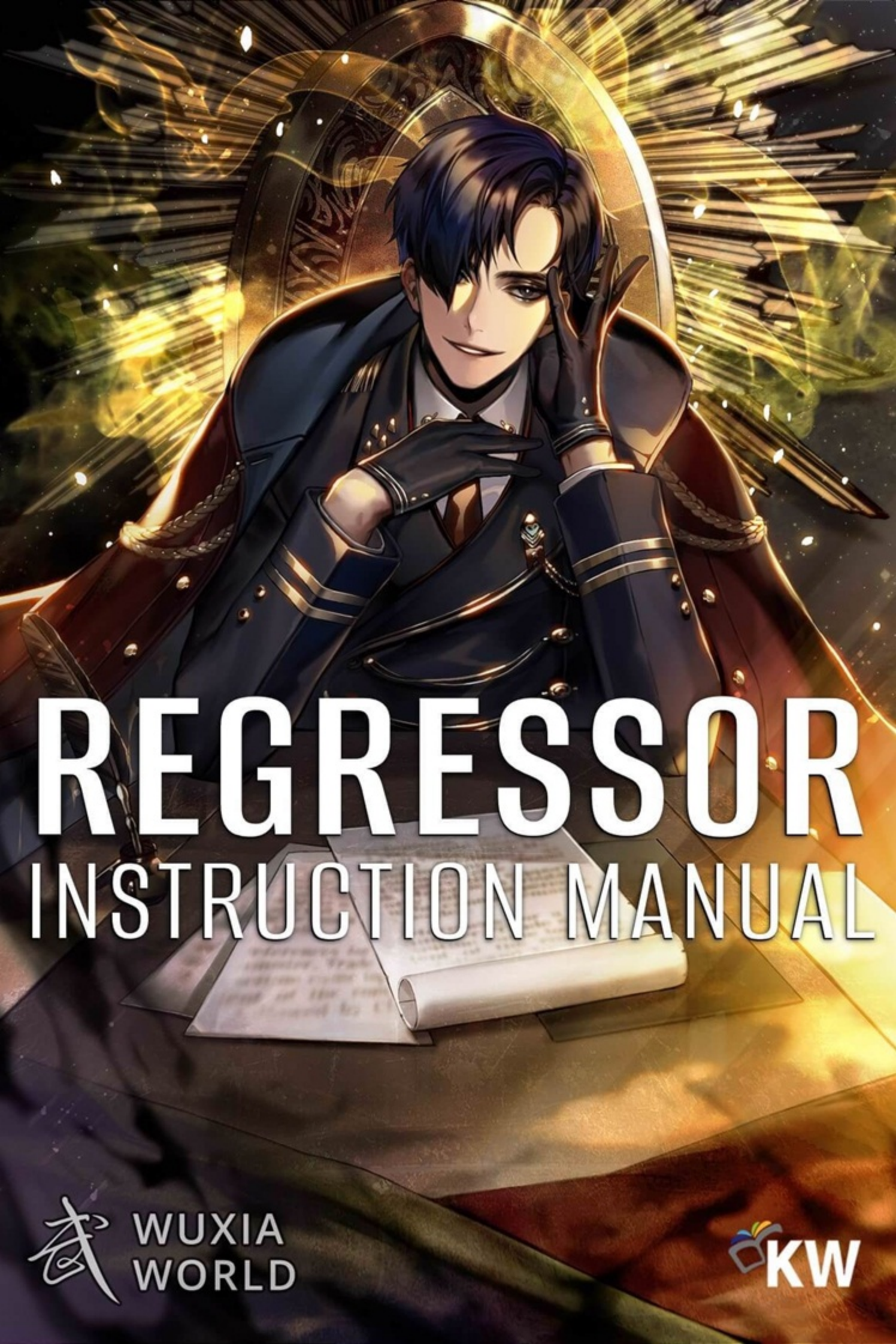

REGRESSOR
INSTRUCTION MANUAL
WUXIA WORLD
KW

REGRESSOR INSTRUCTION MANUAL

– 회귀자 사용설명서 –

- VOLUME 14 -

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[WUXIAWORLD]

CHAPTER 652
THE HERO WHO WILL SAVE THE CONTINENT (1)

Honestly, I didn't think the message was that crazy. Mijin was a mysterious mage, and all I did was send a message saying that I had been relying on her a lot. However, it was definitely effective.

Jung Ha-Yan looked down at her Goddess' Hand Mirror in a daze. It seemed she still hadn't caught on to what was going on. I was sure she couldn't quite understand the message she had just seen.

If Kim Hyun-Sung's main sources of motivation were the sunset and friendship, Jung Ha-Yan's main sources of motivation were jealousy and rage.

Of course, I didn't really have to stoke the flames of Jung Ha-Yan's jealousy and rage, as she was growing steadily, but everyone knew that what I needed at the moment wasn't steady growth but *explosive*.

Unfortunately, Jung Ha-Yan had gotten too lazy for her to grow explosively, and I had to resolve that issue by administering her some sort of stim pack. The stim pack I had just administered to her was Mijin—the mysterious genius mage.

'This will work.'

It had to work. I was worried that Jung Ha-Yan would suddenly go rampant, but I was confident that she wouldn't do something like that. She had endured for an entire year, and Han Sora had been next to her all this while, so she probably wouldn't try and prove her innocence like what she had done in Laios.

I had already sent it, but I still gulped out of nervousness.

And that was when Jung Ha-Yan turned pale.

- *Huh?*

She exclaimed dumbfoundedly, and her expression slowly turned serious.

- *Huh? Huh?*

She would surely realize in just a few seconds that my absurd remark of how my hand mirror got hacked was a lie. Actually, even I thought that it was a ridiculous remark, so there was no way Jung Ha-Yan would fail to see through that lie.

- W-W-Who is she? Who's Mijin? Who's Mijin? Who is she? Who… Who is she?

The first stage was questioning. Soon, Jung Ha-Yan started biting her nails, and it was probably part of the second stage. It seemed that she failed to endure it because she hurriedly tapped on her Goddess' Hand Mirror to call me as if her life depended on it.

However, she had to have noticed that I was busy with another call because I could hear a grinding noise coming from her teeth.

It had been quite a while since I saw this side of Jung Ha-Yan, and she seemed to be living up to my expectations as she started returning to her old self.

The air she was emitting had changed so much and so abruptly that I felt like things were getting out of hand.

- Who is that… Who is it? Who is it? W-Who could that be? Who's Mijin? What's going on? Mijin? M-M-Mijin?

It wasn't like Jung Ha-Yan had zero pride. She knew better than anyone that I couldn't possibly replace her, and she had realized over the past year living at the Magic Tower that she was incredibly powerful.

Jung Ha-Yan was the first archmage of the continent, and she could also cast Teleport, which she had invented by herself. Moreover, she possessed indispensable burst damage that no one could match up to.

Actually, I thought she had gotten even stronger than Cha Hee-Ra.

Cha Hee-Ra was strong, of course, but Kim Hyun-Sung was a better vanguard than her.

I was sure Jung Ha-Yan was happy to see Cha Hee-Ra being left behind. If one were to look at the power dynamic using the perspective of survival of the fittest, it would appear as though Kim Hyun-Sung was gobbling up Cha Hee-Ra's position.

In other words, Jung Ha-Yan definitely thought her position was secure, as she was the only mage of our party.

I was convinced that she was thinking along the lines of—I've already established my territory. I even got a ring, so I have nothing to lose. It's hard to be apart from him for a year, but my suffering is over. I'm about to live happily ever after. He hasn't been hanging out with the others as well because he's too busy. I've conquered this world.

There were skilled mages on the continent, but they probably looked like cavemen using primitive spells in Jung Ha-Yan's eyes.

Jung Ha-Yan was aware that I had been relying on her when it came to magic, so she felt reassured that I would never abandon her. I liked competent people, after all.

She probably came to that conclusion after thinking objectively and setting aside emotions that most couples had for each other. Jung Ha-Yan was pretty clever, so she definitely thought that way.

In that sense, the message she had received just now hurt her pride.

She scratched her head vigorously, and she immediately started calling someone.

- Oh my, it's our Miss Jung Ha-Yan. What are you contacting me about today… It's an honor. *Hahaha*.

- W-W-W-Who's Mijin… Is there Mijin there?

- What? What… do you…

- Who the hell is Mijin? Mijin… W-Who is she?!

- I don't understand what you're saying… Y-You should calm down for now…

- Is she there? I-Is she there right now? Is she at the Magic Tower?!

- *Ah*, I see. Well… I'll have to see if a mage named Mijin has been registered in our

community…

- Mijin… B-Bring me Mijin. Bring me Mijin right now!!!

Huff, huff.

Jung Ha-Yan was so angry that she even raised her voice at the Magic Tower staffer.

Jung Ha-Yan's current level had to be *really angry*, but it seemed that she was on the cusp of becoming *extremely angry*.

I suddenly thought about how I might see quite a few Mijins in the missing persons list.

Soon, I discovered Han Sora, whose salary included quite a few additional payments, such as hazard pay and proficiency pay. She walked into the room and assuaged Jung Ha-Yan's fury in time before her anger level could reach *extremely angry.*

- What's wrong, Miss Jung Ha-Yan? What…

- *Kgh*, who's Mijin… M-M-Mijin…

Han Sora became even more pallid than Jung Ha-Yan.

Her eyes were filled with the instincts of a herbivore who desperately wanted to survive.

Jung Ha-Yan suddenly looked anguished and furious, even though she was all smiles not too long ago, so I could understand Han Sora's reaction.

An unexpected incident had just occurred, and she soon realized that Jung Ha-Yan was on the brink of exploding into *extreme anger*. Han Sora's fearful gaze landed on her hand mirror, and she hurriedly turned around to check her inbox.

[Mijin doesn't exist. Ha-Yan looked like she needed more training, so I created a fictional rival for her to beat.]

- Y-Y-You bastard. You scummy bastard.

She muttered quietly.

'I can hear everything, Sora.'

Even if I couldn't hear her, it wasn't that difficult to deduce what she just said.

- Y-You, *heuk*, you bastard… You're really—*heuk!* you're really—a bastard! *Heuk*…!

Han Sora was the icon of intelligence and learning, so she immediately realized what I wanted her to do.

- What more do you want me to do… What more… do you want me to do… Why do you keep… giving me this burden…

I had definitely heard those words from Kim Hyun-Sung's mouth. Strangely, I felt like I had become one of the higher-ups, but as the light of the new world, I wouldn't give such a dangerous task to someone without giving them rewards.

[If this works out well, I'll guarantee your move.]

Han Sora bit her lips.

[I'll definitely transfer you away. No, wait, transferring you is going to be difficult, but I can guarantee your move, at the very least. You've done well, and it's time for you to shine. This will be your final task, and let's end it all once you're done with this.]

Cold sweat rolled down Han Sora's face. She gulped, and I saw many different emotions on her face. I was sure she was feeling extremely conflicted.

- What's… wrong?

Han Sora definitely thought that the easiest way to handle this situation was to not look at the message that I had sent to Jung Ha-Yan. It would appear forced, but the easiest way to calm Jung Ha-Yan down was convincing her that my hand mirror really got hacked.

'Ah, I think his hand mirror really got hacked.'

Jung Ha-Yan would probably calm down if Han Sora were desperate enough. I was doubting it, of course, but Jung Ha-Yan would probably believe Han Sora if Han Sora phrased her words properly.

I figured this pattern was the secret behind why Han Sora was still alive despite being so close to Jung Ha-Yan for an extended period of time.

Han Sora's gaze was filled with determination. How many people could ignore the temptation of a delicious fruit hanging in front of them? It seemed that she also thought that she could no longer keep living like this and that hanging on the edge of a cliff couldn't be called living but surviving.

I got a bit nervous as I stared at Han Sora.

- M-M-Mijin… Do you know who Mijin is?

Han Sora gulped several times before she started talking.

- *Ah*, w-well… I…

- *Kgh*, do you know her?

I honestly started shaking when I saw Jung Ha-Yan staring quietly at Han Sora without blinking even once.

I was watching the scene from a distance, so I couldn't imagine just how heavy the pressure Han Sora was currently experiencing.

I quietly cheered for her as she struggled to get her words out.

'You can do it, Sora. You're saving the world.'

- I…

'You can do it. Overcome your fears. You're close to Ha-Yan now, aren't you?

- I think I heard of her before. Her name is… Park Mijin.

- R-R-Really?

-Yes. I… don't really know where she lives, but I heard of a mage… who became famous after experiencing explosive growth. It's probably her… I haven't heard any news about her since then… and every report about her was deleted… so I've been wondering about her status… She's probably… I think she's that Mijin.

-…

- The Continental Protection Management Committee is apparently nurturing a group of mages… in secret. I think she's a part of something similar to that. Including the sub guild master, there are only a few people… who are aware of it. It's an armed group that the Committee… has been nurturing… behind the scenes.

There was no such thing, of course, but I felt proud seeing Han Sora speak so well in front of Jung Ha-Yan.

Now that I thought about it, Han Sora was in the same boat as Ji-Hye and me. She had suffered a lot to get to where she was at the moment, so I couldn't help but smile when I discovered her growth as a person and how she was actually so eloquent.

- *Kgh, kgh…*

- You don't… have to worry. I saw her a long time ago, but… she's not the sub guild master's type. L-Look. The text message is nothing more than him cheering for her. There's a big difference between that message and his heart-warming message to you.

- I think he's just saying that he just relies on her as a mage and as another human being. He probably covered it up because he was afraid that you might get hurt… It's not a big deal, so don't worry too much.

- *Kgh…*

- But since he said that he r-relies on her a lot, she must be really a-amazing. Before she vanished into thin air, I heard she was an extremely high-level mage. Jung Ha-Yan… Jung Ha-Yan… Jung Ha…

'You can do it, Sora. Don't back down. Face your fear.'

- Miss… Jung Ha-Yan…

'You can do it, damn it!'

- She…

'You got this, Sora!'

- She was so strong… that I even heard people… comparing her to you. That's probably why Mr. Lee Ki-Young… trusts Park Mijin so much. *Ha… haha…*

I felt like time had actually stopped.

'Shit, she actually said it! She really said it!'

I couldn't help but look away.

CHAPTER 653
THE HERO WHO WILL SAVE THE CONTINENT (2)

The atmosphere was so tense it was palpable. Han Sora was trying her best to convince Jung Ha-Yan that it wasn't a big deal, but there was no way she wasn't worried about her cover getting blown.

If I were in Jung Ha-Yan's shoes, I would be really uncomfortable about it, too.

Let us assume that Kim Hyun-Sung was surreptitiously training an army, a bunch of executive officers, and an alchemist. The alchemist was a genius comparable to me. I noticed that he was being cold to me lately, and I suddenly received such a weird text.

How would I feel?

[Mr. Jin Cheong, I'm really… looking forward to your research. I hope you know that the future of the continent's alchemy lies in you. You're the only one I can rely on when it comes to this.]

[What?]

[*Ah*, I'm sorry, Mr. Ki-Young. I think my hand mirror got hacked… Don't worry about it. I think I got hacked.]

[What the? Shit, what's going on? Are you serious?]

If I were in Jung Ha-Yan's shoes, I would do everything in my power to turn that alchemist into a demon summoner.

However, Jung Ha-Yan was obsessed with me, so she would definitely do something worse than that. It was only natural for her to be furious at the non-existent Park Mijin, and I was sure that she wouldn't feel relieved until she had gotten rid of her.

There was a really high chance that the lives of every woman out there with the name Mijin would be in danger. Of course, there was no way she could get rid of the talents I was managing. If I were in her shoes, I would be in despair.

However, Jung Ha-Yan still hadn't reached the absolute limits of her growth, so she still had one option to take.

'Strength.'

There wouldn't be any issues if she defeated Mijin with her strength and proved that she was better than Mijin. If Jung Ha-Yan weren't confident in her strength, she would definitely choose the easy way, but Jung Ha-Yan and I were different.

Yes, it was true that she had gotten a bit lazy these days, but she was still a genius mage.

She had the potential to become one of the five strongest people on the continent.

'There's even a chance that she'll become the strongest person on the continent.'

Perhaps she would become an all-rounder that would make up for Kim Hyun-Sung's weaknesses. Kim Hyun-Sung was strong, but he still needed great support. Jung Ha-Yan could provide him with the support he needed to wreak havoc.

Anyway, Han Sora probably understood what I was trying to do here. I wanted to instruct her about what she had to do, but there was no way she could read my message.

She was biting her lips and was waiting for Jung Ha-Yan's reaction.

-…

- I'm… sure it's all nonsense. There's no way he'd…

-…

- Compare someone to you…

- *Kgh*, I don't like it. I really don't like it… Park Mijin, she's really, really, really annoying. R-R-Right? Park Mijin is annoying, right?

- Yes, I'm… annoyed as well…

'It'd be nice if Han Sora would give her more details… '

The rice was already cooked, but it seemed Han Sora had no idea that she had to put out the flames or the rice would become overcooked. Han Sora had no idea how to proceed, but…

'Ah, I think I can do it.'

I thought I could do something similar to what Benigoa had been doing.

'I got wings, and I now have my own holy power.'

I could probably deliver her a message through a quest.

I mustered the holy power within me, and I hurled it at Han Sora.

Han Sora flinched. It seemed that she had received the quest that I had made for her.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Tell Jung Ha-Yan that Park Mijin is in charge of the Northwest region. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

'What the… It really works.'

I never thought it would actually work, but I did think it was possible…

'It really worked. Shit.'

My job had become a Mythic-rank job, so could I be considered a demigod?

Han Sora looked really surprised, but she quickly composed herself and faced her fears upon realizing what I was trying to do. Moments later, I saw her speaking through the Telescope.

- P-Park Mijin is probably… going to be in charge of the Northwest region…

- But I was originally…

- Yeah. You and the others… were originally going to be in charge, but… you have many things to handle. The sub guild master is probably worried about your health. He probably doesn't want you to get too exhausted. Your workload is already exhausting, after all.

'You're doing great. You're doing really well.'

I was astonished to see Han Sora's way of calming down Jung Ha-Yan. It was like she had an instruction manual to operate Jung Ha-Yan, who had become akin to a runaway train.

It was also impressive how she could do it despite her fear and anxiety. However, it looked like Han Sora was in a trance. Her words came out of her mouth instinctively, and it was all for the sake of survival.

- You… think so?

- Yes, but…

- *Ugh, kgh…*

- I think you need to be a bit careful. Of course… the sub guild master probably didn't have any other meaning behind it, but… you never know what this Mijin person thinks about him. She might think that his kindness is something more than that… and she's a genius, so the sub guild master is probably taking care of her. You know how much he cherishes those with strength. Park Mijin probably caught his attention.

- S-S-S-Should I kill her? If I find her… If I find her and kill her… S-She's probably still weaker than me, right? I'm definitely strong enough to get rid of her.

'No, don't kill her.'

I couldn't let her kill someone who was non-existent.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Don't let her kill. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

- L-Let's kill her. Yeah, let's do that. That should take care of the problem, right?

- We… can't kill her. If we do… *um*… the sub guild master will definitely find out… So, please don't kill her. If you kill her… Please don't think about doing that.

'Hang in there, Sora. Stand firm, Han Sora.'

- Y-You just need to let the sub guild master know. Yes, that's what you can do. You can prove it to him yourself.

- L-Like how I proved my innocence a long time ago?

- No! Not proving your innocence! Don't do that! That's not what I meant. You have to prove to him that he doesn't need other mages. Use this opportunity to show him that he doesn't need… anyone else.

- *Ah…*

- If you prove to him that you've gotten a lot stronger to the point that he won't need Park Mijin or other mages, he'll probably have a change of heart. Of course, it'll be difficult, but… I'm sure you can get stronger. Right? Right?

- Ye… ah…

- Have more confidence. You're cute and beautiful enough and have skills. Even the sub guild master has fallen head over heels for you. He even sent you several messages like this. Right? He's always thinking about you despite his busy schedule.

- B-But what if Mijin… becomes stronger as well?

- E-Even if she does get stronger… her talent definitely has a limit. No matter how hard she tries, she won't be able to catch up to you because you're a genius and special.

- Y-Y-You think so?

- Y-Yes. I think so.

Han Sora's breathing was rough, and her face was beyond pallid. It wasn't really strange because she was experiencing the full extent of Jung Ha-Yan's killing intent. If I were in her shoes, I would be trembling in my boots as well.

It looked like Han Sora had won the first skirmish, but it seemed she was aware that she couldn't let her guard down just yet. I was sure her true mission was to placate and assuage Jung Ha-Yan's stress once she actually started studying.

I was worried as well, but I felt like I could trust her upon seeing her determined look.

She looked like she was suffocating, but she was doing a great job. She looked like a hero in my eyes, and it felt like she was the hero who had been saving the continent all this while and would save the continent in the future.

I really had to give her a reward once all of this was over.

Han Sora's actions at the moment moved me because she reminded me of a selfless hero. *'You're the hero of this continent. Hang in there… just a bit longer. You really are the true hero of this continent.'*

- I think… it's best if you start studying today. I'll help you with whatever I can… and I'll compliment you a lot to the sub guild master.

- *Kgh*, thank you. Thank you, Sora.

- It's nothing. It should be me who should thank you.

Jung Ha-Yan barely made physical contact with others, but she lightly hugged Han Sora, which created a heartwarming scene.

Of course, the surprised Han Sora looked like a frog that had been captured by a snake, but she looked really happy at the same time. She looked as if she was giving a thank-you speech to someone.

I applauded her. There were still some parts that worried me, but the most important fact here was that Jung Ha-Yan would once again experience a growth spurt.

I was all smiles because I felt like we had finally taken care of one of the issues I had

to handle one way or another.

'I have a lot of work to do, and I need to take care of them as fast and as effectively as possible.'

There were internal and external issues that I had to handle as soon as possible.

'There's the saying, cultivate oneself, take care of one's family, govern your people properly, and bring peace to the world. I can do all that by just taking care of the Blue Guild. Of course, the top priority was paying attention to Jung Ha-Yan's growth."

The door was flung open.

[A Rare-rank Forced Quest has been activated.]

[F-Father Lee Ki-Young! I mean, Lee Ki-Young, my junior! You're awake! (0/1)]

'…'

[I was really surprised to see a quest appear from out of the blue. Our Lee Ki-Young really is a fast learner. He adapts speedily as well. *Ah*, you know I love you, right? (0/1)]

'…'

~

[Your adaptation speed really surprised me… Who knew you'd be able to use your holy power to create a quest so quickly? I think the system responded immediately because you were the one who made a quest. It's really rare for someone to be on the same wavelength as the system so quickly… I think the current system has decided to welcome you because you're working for the continent's sake… Right now, the only thing you can do is give quests, but once you're here, you'll be able to do a lot more than that. (0/1)]

'…'

[You'll be able to read minds… and do other things. The higher-ups are very satisfied. Anyway, we're going to keep working together, right? Father Lee Ki-Young? We'll always be together, right? We're going to invest in the same coins, right? I-I also want

to… buy, hodl, and sell coins with you. (0/1)]

'Let's change the subject… What's going on right now? Shit, is this really happening right now? Is it because of you guys?'

[…(0/1)]

'It's not, right?'

[…(0/1)]

'Miss Benigoa, I'm asking if this is really happening because of you guys.'

[So, the incident back then… somewhat affected it… b-but… the rift opened. Wait… we're still investigating it… so the higher-ups are doing their best right now. I've also been going around to different places because I think it's best if we receive help from as many people as possible. A-Anyway, we're not the problem. It was going to happen eventually… and even if we're gods, we can't resist something that has already been decided… So don't be too disappointed… (0/1)]

'How long do we have?'

[A Rare-rank Forced Quest has been activated.]

[36 days… (0/1)]

'Shit… '

[A Rare-rank quest has been activated.]

[Father Lee Ki-Young… you can do it, right? You've become so strong, so you can do it, right? You're not going to abandon me, are you? You're not. (0/1)]

[A Legendary-rank quest has been activated.]

[In 36 days, protect the continent with Benigoa. Please… protect it with her. (0/1)]

[Reward - The Goddess' Love]

'Stop wasting holy power, damn it… Stop using them on Legendary quests.'

CHAPTER 654
I HOPE YOU RECONCILE (1)

[A Rare-rank quest has been activated.]

[Protect the continent 36 days later and accept Benigoa's apology. (0/1)]

[Reward - A dinner of love made by Goddess Benigoa]

'I don't want that, damn it.'

I felt like I finally understood how she went bankrupt. She could have delivered that message through an Average-rank quest, but she used a Rare-rank quest for some reason. It felt like she had no idea how to budget her holy power.

I pondered about Benigoa's spending, but her words bothered me more than that.

'Thirty-six days… Thirty-six days… '

To some, it was short… to others, it was long. Actually, it wasn't a long time.

Jung Ha-Yan's awakening project was already in Han Sora's hands, but I felt like Han Sora was being too cautious about it. Would Jung Ha-Yan become even stronger than the Jung Ha-Yan in our past lives in just thirty-six days? To make it more challenging… wouldn't it be better if I took Han Sora out of the plan as well?

"…"

'No, that's a bad idea.'

Jung Ha-Yan would explode if I were to do that. She had done so many crazy things in the past that I couldn't imagine just what she would do without her suppressor.

'Han Sora has to stay by her side.'

I hurriedly tried to think of a plan, but I thought it wouldn't hurt to watch over her

for five to ten days. If she were to explode, it would be more efficient to let her explode one or two days before the deadline so she could take her anger out on those pigeons. If she exploded too early, we would have to handle Jung Ha-Yan before the pigeons.

[Father Lee Ki-Young… you're not going to abandon me, right? (0/1)]

'Shit, stop talking to me, Benigoa. I'm trying to think.'

The deployment of troops was another issue.

Lee Ji-Hye had written out the guidelines, but it was a sensitive topic, so I had no choice but to raise my voice to many different people. I looked like a tyrant, but I wasn't. I was the type to create a balance while thinking about the interests of each group, and even though there were times when I was being oppressive, I still listened to the opinions of others. A tyrant would eventually get assassinated by their subjects, after all.

'It would take over a week just to coordinate and discuss each other's opinions… '

It would be nice if Rafael woke up in the following thirty-six days, but I wasn't sure if that bastard could even fight properly. He was the type to recover fast, but it would be a miracle if he woke up without any injuries

If the mysterious mage, Park Mijin, truly existed. I would have made her stand guard in the Northwest region, as I still had no idea how many angels had been created so far. I received great news that the named angels had already been imbued with holy power.

Unfortunately, we didn't have enough angels, and I couldn't help but decide to prioritize either quality or quantity.

'If I have no choice… I really need to cut off ties.'

I thought I would have at least a month, but after hearing the confirmation that we really only had a month left, I became desperate.

To make things worse, I had no idea how to resolve the issue between Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Hyun-Sung. It seemed like a trivial conflict, but Jo Hye-Jin was one of the few vanguards capable of keeping up with Kim Hyun-Sung. I couldn't tolerate even a

single negative variable, so I frowned upon seeing Kim Hyun-Sung pushing her away.

Regardless, the issue between Jo Hye-Jin and Kim Hyun-Sung was pretty low on my priority list.

'I can probably resolve this later by making time for us three. Once everything is over… Yeah, I think that's the best action to take here.'

A third party couldn't keep on meddling with other people's love life, but we were in an urgent situation. This was a painful time for Jo Hye-Jin, but it would be wise to push back the Kim Hyun-SungxJo Hye-Jin project.

I saw Jo Hye-Jin in the distance, and I also saw Lee Ji-Hye comforting the pitiful-looking Jo Hye-Jin.

"You sure took your sweet time," Lee Ji-Hye complained.

'Don't be too harsh on me, noona. I was working. I'm having a difficult time as well.'

"Sub Guild Master," Jo Hye-Jin called out.

"*Ah!* Miss Hye-Jin," I greeted.

"I'm glad that you're awake," she said.

"Are you… feeling better?" I asked.

"Yes, I'm fine. *Haha*, I'm fine." She laughed.

Obviously, she didn't sound fine. She looked like she was suffering from a bigger headache than me and was carrying all the troubles in the world. For some reason, it pricked my conscience, which was unlike me.

The holy power within me was probably stimulating the little bit of sympathy that was inside of me. Honestly, it wasn't really my fault, but I did feel bad, and it was just normal for humans to feel bad for someone else.

She was trying her best to look fine, but the atmosphere around her was pretty dark.

'I'm sorry, Hye-Jin. I really was going to fix it, but… we really don't have time… You

understand, right? We're friends, after all. I'm told that we only have thirty-six days left… so taking care of the other problems is the priority… I think today's meeting is going to be pretty long… and I have a lot of work I need to get done.'

"You don't have to worry about me, Sub Guild Master. The only thing I'm good for is my strong body. That's all I have, *haha*," Jo Hye-Jin laughed.

"Don't say things like that, Miss Hye-Jin. You're tall and have really good skin. You're also good at taking care of administrative work. Do you think the Blue Guild will be fine without you? You're good at chess… I had a really hard time yesterday, remember?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

'You played chess with her yesterday? Hye-Jin, how could you play chess… with someone else?'

"*Ha, haha…* I appreciate the compliment," she said.

"I really mean it. Don't you agree?" she asked me.

'Don't ask me, noona. I can't even look at Jo Hye-Jin's face right now. However, it's true that she has nice skin.'

I inwardly lampooned. I turned to Jo Hye-Jin, and her eyes bothered me.

'She looks dead… '

I was sure Jo Hye-Jin was truly suffering. Her friend was suffering from amnesia, and he got kidnapped as well, which almost led to his death. She had been hiding his friend's secret from Kim Hyun-Sung, but Kim Hyun-Sung still discovered the truth.

As a result, Kim Hyun-Sung started to hate her.

With that in mind, it would be strange if Jo Hye-Jin's mental health hadn't taken a hit.

The situation was complicated, and I couldn't imagine just how complex Jo Hye-Jin's feelings were at the moment. However, she would definitely get the shock of her life once she discovered Doom Hyun-Sung.

'He's just going through puberty right now, so you should be the bigger person and try to understand him.'

I wanted to tell her that, but Jo Hye-Jin spoke first.

“I’m sorry, Sub Guild Master.”

‘…’

“In the end… I… couldn’t protect your secret… I’m sorry,” she apologized.

‘No, Hye-Jin. Don’t… do that. There’s no need to apologize. Stop making me feel bad. It’s not like you told him, so why are you trying to take responsibility for it?’

‘“No, it’s not your fault, Miss Hye-Jin…” I told her.

“No, it is my fault. I was the one… that told Rafael, and I’m the one who created this situation,” she confessed.

“We’re friends, so you don’t have to apologize. If you think about it, only Kim Hyun-Sung and a few people know about it, so the situation isn’t all that different from before, so don’t be so hard on yourself. And I know there wasn’t anything else you could have done at the time, Miss Hye-Jin,” I explained.

“But still…”

‘No, just stop. You’re making me feel bad… Please stop making me feel even more bad.’

“How are you feeling?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

‘I’m fine, but… I’ll feel like shit if you start worrying about me.’

“I’m glad you’re not suffering from other side effects,” she commented.

‘You’re really making me feel guilty.’

It had been a while since I felt this much guilt. I wouldn’t mind if she resented me a little or complained to me, but she was genuinely worried about me, which made me feel bad.

‘Maybe I should pick a day to resolve this. I don’t think taking a day off will hurt.’

If I used whatever personal time I had left, I could probably fix Jo Hye-Jin’s problem. I

could take breaks in between my work as well. As I said before, things would only get worse if I let Jo Hye-Jin wallow in despair.

'Ah, I should stop justifying this… I really don't have time.'

"I was really shocked, but I'm really relieved to see you healthy. At the time, I was really surprised… I couldn't think about anything else… Thinking about it now, there's another thing I need to apologize for. I'm really sorry for not carrying out my task properly. I'm sorry," she said.

'Don't lower your head like that.'

"You don't need to lower your head. Everything worked out in the end, so just forget everything and start off with a clean start. I'm embarrassed to hear you say that you were worried about me. *Hahaha*…" I laughed.

"I still wanted to apologize… I had so many things I needed to apologize to you about…" she said.

"Are you crying?" I asked.

"I'm not," she answered.

'Don't cry, Hye-Jin.'

I couldn't help but think that she was being honest and genuine here, and I finally realized why the masked scum in our previous lives disliked her.

I know I shouldn't be thinking about this, but I started recalling what Jo Hye-Jin said inside the dungeon. The way she tossed her weapon and told Rafael to take her hostage instead of me had truly moved me. It would be an understatement to say that Jo Hye-Jin's declaration was the highlight of that scene.

She truly reminded me of Park Deok-Gu.

The tears I saw in Jo Hye-Jin's eyes were real tears. She was sincerely apologizing to me. I wasn't sure if she was aware of the fact that I was actually living comfortably in the dungeon, but she was probably thinking that I had suffered a lot.

'Shit, now I feel even more bad.'

In the end, I had to nod.

'I'll use one day to help her since I need to help her anyway.'

"*Um*, Miss Hye-Jin… I heard that Mr. Hyun-Sung had said some harsh things to you…" I mentioned.

"You don't need to worry about it because I completely understand his point of view…" she said.

"I think you've misunderstood him. To be honest, Mr. Hyun-Sung seems to be on edge lately. It's like his personality changed a bit because of various reasons… I'm not sure what you heard about him, but I'm sure he didn't really mean it," I explained.

'He kind of turned evil.'

"I guarantee that he didn't mean the things he said to you," I repeated.

My comment wasn't exactly *that* reliable, but despite that, I noticed Jo Hye-Jin feeling a little bit better. It was like a candle was lit in a dark room, and obviously, Jo Hye-Jin was holding that candle.

"I'll tell you the details later, but I'll help you two reconcile," I offered.

"No, I'm sure you're busy… You don't need to worry yourself over this, especially at a time like this, Sub Guild Master. I'm okay," she declined.

Despite saying that, she seemed to be looking forward to it.

'Hye-Jin, I'll make sure you see Kim Hyun-Sung's ending.'

I genuinely wanted her and Kim Hyun-Sung to get together and live happily ever after.

CHAPTER 655
MEETING (1)

I couldn't carry out the plan right away, but I could refine it in the meantime. If possible, I would have already dispatched Jo Hye-Jin as my avatar, but we didn't have the luxury of time to do something like that.

The best I could do was have them talk it out.

"You don't have to keep declining my offer since making time for you two to meet isn't difficult. I think it's best to talk things out all at once rather than letting you two remain so awkward with each other. I'm sure Mr. Hyun-Sung feels really bad about it. He'll probably be happy about the idea," I explained.

"But it's my fault…"

"It's not your fault, Miss Hye-Jin. It's no one's fault. The misunderstanding simply piled up, and it blew up. Shake off that burden on your shoulders. I know that you feel sorry for me, but… I'll feel uncomfortable if you keep acting like this.

"It's not like I experienced anything bad, and I managed to return safely. I didn't really get injured… so stop being so hard on yourself…" I told her. "…"

'I might've resented you a little bit if I were in a bit of pain, but it didn't happen. In the end, it was a huge success, Hye-Jin. I even got wings. Wings! You'll be surprised once you see them… '

"Everything worked out well," I added.

'I got wings.'

I smiled as I spoke because I needed to show her that I wasn't suffering. It wasn't what I was expecting, but Jo Hye-Jin looked at me differently. I felt proud because she looked as if she was genuinely touched by my words. Of course, I was bothered by Lee Ji-Hye's gaze, who looked at me like I was scum, but…

'She should be thankful for me.'

After all, it wasn't like Jo Hye-Jin hadn't committed any mistakes.

'Stop looking at me like that, Ji-Hye noona.'

"*Ahem*, anyway, don't you have to get going?" Lee Ji-Hye asked.

"*Ah*, I think it's best if I get going," I said.

"I already contacted the conference center ahead of time. It's being held nearby, so you can take a carriage there, and I'll inform you about the content of the meeting inside the carriage," she informed.

"Thank you."

"It's nothing to thank me for. I'm just doing my job," she said.

"Will you really be okay, Sub Guild Master?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"Of course. Anyway, we will have to make an official announcement soon. I also can't delay it just because I want to… I'm sure the Vatican will have things to announce by the time I get there," I replied.

That was what I told her, but the situation wasn't that great.

'It's too sudden.'

I wasn't sure how the meeting was going to proceed.

The majority of the participating influential figures had deep relationships with each other, but they wouldn't always show kindness when it came to something like this. I was sure people would listen to me if we were complete strangers, but politically, one could never say for sure when their friends would change to become their enemies.

An example of this was sending the major guilds of Dawan to the seventh line, where the death rate was higher than average. My relationship with the Mist Summoner and that archer was pretty great, but I didn't think they would agree to my arrangement.

The Continental Protection Management Committee's existence was basically a guarantee—a guarantee that every region on the continent would receive the minimum amount of support and reinforcement.

Unfortunately, the continent wasn't truly united beneath one banner. There were many people with their own vested interests. Laois, the Sacred Democratic Country, the Vatican, and the Kingdom of the Elves would support me.

However, there were still many figures within the Union of Kingdoms that were hostile toward us. The same was true for the survivors of the Federation. Actually, I was convinced that even the Republic didn't trust us completely.

Of course, we managed to win over the famous, named members of each group, but…

'This is going to be difficult.'

To make things worse, this meeting would completely overwrite the existing manual. I was feeling a bit stressed because there wasn't really anything wrong with the existing plan. Moreover…

'This meeting was convened in a hurry, so lobbying is out of the question… '

There wasn't enough time to deepen my relationship with my corrupt friends.

If Lee Ji-Hye couldn't prepare ahead of time, it would probably take me a long time to handle this issue.

'Is she even taking breaks?'

Her work was so high quality that I couldn't help but start thinking twice if she were even taking breaks and stuff. As always, the information she provided to me in the carriage was satisfactory.

'Well, she was playing chess with Hye-Jin, so she must be taking breaks.'

Jo Hye-Jin's gaze at Lee Ji-Hye had become a bit friendly.

"We won over some of the nobles from the Union of Kingdoms, and we're currently talking to the Republic. However, we have quite a few things we need to give them after the war is over. Basically, they're telling us to give them as much as they've

sacrificed for us," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"…"

"A few of the major guilds requested that we give them the rights to manage the tutorial dungeons as a reward, so we decided to put that on hold for now. The majority of them are already thinking about the profits they'll reap after the war.

"They already know that they're going to sacrifice something during the war, so they're focused on what they'll obtain after the war. The issue is that they're all thinking about the same thing… You'll have to meet and talk to them, but I'll contact them as well.

"I've scheduled meetings with the members between the meetings, so just go ahead and check the schedule," she said.

"So I can't even rest during my breaks. The schedule is completely full. Ten minutes per person won't be enough…" I commented.

"You're good at playing along, and your specialty is making people look like idiots. I believe you'll do well. It's up to you how this will end," she said.

"…"

"*Ah!* I forgot to tell you this earlier, but we can't change the supply route either. It can't be helped since our existing plans all went down the drain, but… it's really unfortunate. If we had more time, we could've built a tunnel or found another route…" she added.

"Didn't we start construction work on this?" I asked.

"We already pulled them out since they won't finish on time anyway… If Jung Ha-Yan is available, she might be able to do something about it… Moving supplies is pretty easy for her with that spell of hers," she replied.

"She's unavailable at the moment," I told her.

"I knew it, but what's the point of her teleport when she can't even help out when it matters?" she complained.

“Have you checked if there’s anything wrong with the towers?” I asked.

“We already did a test run, and we didn’t find any issues. They can be used right away, so you don’t have to worry about that,” she answered.

‘You’re so talented, noona.’

It was no wonder the Black Swan Guild was trying its best to make her stay in the guild.

Many of the Black Swan Guild members followed her to work for the Continental Protection Management Committee. Ha Yeon-Soo and Park Yeon-Joo, the Guild Master of the Black Swan Guild, had been sending messages about how we should return Lee Ji-Hye to the Black Swan Guild once everything was over.

I really wanted to keep her by my side because she was very competent, and she was always doing her best to become a better person. She possessed a variety of skills, which was probably the reason she became strong enough to destroy the continent with the villains in her past life.

‘I’m glad that she’s my comrade in this life.’

“By the way… I think you should be a bit more aggressive this time,” Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

“I was thinking the same thing. I expect them to show some resistance, but…”

“It can’t be helped because we’re not in a situation where we can take care of every issue as usual. Using your power to oppress those who can be oppressed is the most reasonable thing to do here. We can just handle the issues later,” she said.

“Maybe I should’ve become a tyrant,” I commented.

“If you think about it, you’re pretty similar to one… Don’t forget the lessons history teaches us. We’re not *that* corrupted yet,” she reminded me.

“…”

“By the way, how long do we have left? You don’t look so good,” she asked.

“Thirty-six days,” I replied.

“What?”

“We have thirty-six days left,” I repeated.

“…”

“…”

I was expecting that kind of expression from her.

She knew that we didn’t have a lot of time, but she didn’t think that it would happen so soon.

“You think we’ll be fine? Only thirty-six days? T-That’s… too short,” she stuttered.

‘I agree, noona.’

“We’re still in the middle of dispatching the troops, and I’m sure it’ll take at least thirty days to dispatch all the troops. We can’t even use Jung Ha-Yan, so we have no other choice but to take the cumbersome route. What about the supplies and the soldiers’ fatigue levels? Do you not have any other mage capable of casting Teleport?” she questioned.

‘I would have used them if there were one.’

“We need to make it work. We have no other choice,” I replied.

“…”

“…”

“Oppa,” she called out.

“Yeah?”

“There’s an escape manual, right? Shouldn’t we be prepared to escape?” she asked.

“Of course we should,” I answered.

"…"

"…"

"*Wow*, you're really… really…" she paused.

"…"

"You're more amazing and scummier than I imagined. That's the first thing you made as soon as you heard what was going to happen, right?" she asked.

"…"

"…"

"I was going to tell you eventually, and while we're on the subject, I can only give you a few slots on Noah's Ark. Write down the ten people you want to get on it, and when it's time to escape, we'll bring them with us and run," I instructed her.

"I'm happy, but ten people… that's not enough…" she muttered.

"Things will become more complicated the more people we take, so we have no choice. As soon as things go downhill, I'm going to cut them off and run, so watch for my signal," I told her.

"I expect nothing less from you," she said.

"Speed is the most important thing when escaping. I think it's best to pack up my stuff after the meeting is over," I said.

"You'll probably feel really sad when we actually do run away since you've achieved so many things here… It'll feel like someone else will take your fruits of labor," she described.

"That's why I'm telling you that we should do our best so that others won't take what's ours. Anyway, let's get ready to get out. I think we're almost there," I suggested.

"We have to start off on the right foot," she commented.

“Yeah.”

It looks like she agreed with the fact that we had to start off on the right foot. I could see the unique expression she would show whenever she was about to attend important meetings or training.

The meeting had to be really important for her as well. It made sense because the meeting would decide whether we would get to keep the fruits of our labor or not.

I picked up the pace, and people bowed toward me.

It seemed that we were in the so-called command center because I could see many influential figures throughout the continent here, named adventurers, and people with Legendary-rank skills. There were also quite a few people I had never seen before, which made it clear that the important figures of the continent were here.

I relaxed and fixed my outfit because I had a feeling that I was going to be talking a lot.

‘Hyun-Sung is probably inside as well.’

I wondered if he was sitting there quietly like a folding screen because he was always like that during meetings. Jo Hye-Jin was here as my bodyguard, and she looked kind of nervous. I adjusted my posture, and I took another step.

“…”

‘What the… What’s with this atmosphere?’

I thought I would hear a cacophony of noises, but the room was quiet.

The hostile light in everyone’s eyes made my skin tingle.

‘I think I’ve seen this scene from somewhere before.’

This atmosphere reminded me of the atmosphere whenever the chairman of a certain country in the north back on Earth was about to announce the nation’s state of affairs.

Everyone was being cautious of one person, and I saw them glancing at Kim Hyun-

Sung.

“Chairman Lee Ki-Young has arrived!”

‘What the… no. I’m not that kind of chairman.’

CHAPTER 656
MEETING (2)

I couldn't help but become cautious. It was so silent that I couldn't hear even the breathing of the people here. The majority weren't even wiping off the sweat that was dripping down their faces, but the room wasn't even hot.

A control temperature spell had definitely been cast on this room, so it was weird how they were sweating bullets.

Eventually, a thunderous applause echoed.

"Chairman Lee Ki-Young has arrived!" someone shouted, but their voice was trembling.

Clap, clap, clap!

They clapped so loudly and vigorously that I had no idea whether they would even stop clapping or not. They were clapping so desperately to the point that it seemed like they were competing, and to make things worse, they gave me a standing ovation.

I didn't know how to react.

They were all important figures of the continent, so it was a surreal sight for me. In addition, everyone looked scared for some reason.

Well, not exactly everyone. Oscar, the figures from the Vatican, Senator Castlerock, Senator Caitlyn, Senator Elise, and the others in roughly the same position as them in the Sacred Democratic Country looked extremely satisfied.

They looked as if I truly deserved this treatment.

Clap, clap, clap!

They stopped clapping when I sat down.

'Stop it, guys. Just stop.'

Lee Ji-Hye also looked surprised, but…

'She seems to be enjoying this situation.'

She was trembling next to me, so I was sure that goosebumps had broken out all over her. Lee Ji-Hye had probably been wanting to see this sight, and she was obviously thinking that she had made the right choice.

She didn't seem curious about how the atmosphere turned out this way, no, she wasn't even thinking about uncovering the reason behind it. She either just wanted to enjoy this thunderous applause, or she already knew the truth.

I thought I knew as well because I could see exactly who did all this.

"Ladies and gentlemen… please take your seats."

The meeting room became quiet once again. I was shocked because no one was talking, but I had a hint as to why no one was talking. They were all waiting for me to talk.

"I'm sorry for being late—"

"*Cough, cough*."

"…"

"…"

"*Cough*, I-I'm sorry. Sorry, *cough*."

It felt like I had seen this scene from somewhere.

'Who coughed just now? My Mind's Eye is telling me that a demon is in your head. Hurry and tell the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung to deal with them!'[1]

I really wanted to say that line out loud, but the atmosphere was too serious for me to say that. The poor guy had to be choking because he was trembling, and he desperately covered his mouth to stifle his coughs.

The poor guy was a prideful and powerful adventurer who had crawled his way up to his current position, so I couldn't help but become curious about what was being discussed while I was away. How come the atmosphere became like this?

As expected, the poor guy looked at Kim Hyun-Sung.

I thought this atmosphere wasn't necessary. I cleared my throat, and Kim Hyun-Sung glanced at me. I was worried that he was still Doom Hyun-Sung, but I didn't notice any hostility or negative emotions in his eyes.

He seemed happy to see me but worried at the same time, and I understood why he felt that way.

I definitely looked like someone who had dragged his exhausted body out of bed as soon as he woke up. Kim Hyun-Sung was probably thinking that I was once again working hard for the continent.

I nodded at him to tell him that I was fine, and he looked relieved. He nodded slightly as well. He looked as if he was telling me that he was going to take care of everything, but there were some things that bothered me.

Honestly, I liked this situation because it gave me less stress knowing that I could proceed with this meeting without any hecklers, but anything that was too hard and inflexible would—

'—would inevitably break… '

There had to be a difference between being a bit aggressive and being oppressive.

These bastards might resist by taking the Outer God's side or by betting on a third option. Of course, I wasn't sure if anyone here was crazy enough to do that, but a group would usually have one crazy member.

'Hyun-Sung, I appreciate the thought, but this is a bit too much. Did you beat them up or something? Were you suffocating them with your killing intent?'

There was a chance that the atmosphere changed when they heard that I was coming, but it was most likely that the atmosphere had always been like this since the meeting started. The issue was that I had no idea how to lighten things up.

I soon came up with a reasonable idea. If Kim Hyun-Sung were the bad cop, I had to be the good cop.

I showed my palm to the host of the meeting, and I heard him talking, "C-Chairman Lee Ki-Young of the Continental Protection Management Committee… well…"

'What's wrong with him?'

I walked up to the podium out of frustration.

"*Uh*… an announcement, no, a presentation, no, a discussion… will… be announced…"

He sounded awkward, so I clapped once and smiled, which seemed to assuage the tense atmosphere.

"I'm Chairman Lee Ki-Young of the Continental Protection Management Committee. I apologize for being late to the meeting, and I sincerely apologize for making all of you wait for such a long time.

"I was planning on telling all of you the state of the current situation, which I'm sure all of you are curious about. I'm also going to talk about our plans and the things that'll happen later, but…" I paused.

"…"

"The atmosphere is a little more serious than usual. Of course, I know what you're all worried about, but… I think it's okay to relax a little. It's hard to think in tense situations like this… and nothing has really happened just yet," I continued.

"…"

"The Outer God still doesn't have a firm grip on the continent," I said.

Some of them had to have realized that I was trying to lighten the mood because they patted their chests with a look of relief. However, I could see that they still felt suffocated and oppressed.

The atmosphere was still tense, but it had become less tense than earlier, so I thought it was fine. It was the perfect atmosphere for me to talk, and I was sure that no one would try to criticize me or ask questions while I was talking.

Who would do something like that when Kim Hyun-Sung was watching?

“Unfortunately, it’s true that our current situation is bad,” I confessed.

“…”

“Thirty-six days,” I said.

“…”

“The Continental Protection Management Committee has determined that we have exactly thirty-six days until the prophecy comes true,” I told them.

It felt like the silence was broken for the first time. Their mumbling told me that they were truly astonished. Of course, all I really heard was their groans and sighs, but the silence was still shattered.

‘Only thirty-six days… ’

Who could remain calm facing such a tight deadline?

I was sure some of them expected or were certain that the foreign pillar of light was related to Benigoa’s prophecy, but I figure that none of them expected that we only had such a short amount of time as our grace period.

“I know this is too sudden, but according to the Continental Protection Administration Law, the entire continent is now in a state of war emergency. All armed groups and nations throughout the continent will temporarily be under the jurisdiction of the Committee.

“The first operational authority will be in the hands of the Committee as well. The system will temporarily become akin to the military. As I had mentioned, we intend to keep it this way until the war is over and the continent has stabilized,” I explained.

‘This is the problem.’

I had no idea what they would say to oppose me, but they would probably say…

‘Isn’t this too sudden? There are only thirty-six days left? What does that even mean? I also think that handing over the main operational authority to the Continental

Protection Management Committee is just unreasonable.

'There must be sufficient training and discussion before we do something so drastic. We understand the need to unify the command center, but it's more reasonable to divide the command center by region and have several operational authorities commanding them.

'I think the soldiers will just get confused if we were to suddenly implement a new system.'

I was prepared to answer those types of remarks.

When the Continental Protection Management Committee had just been established, there was one figure from the Union of Kingdoms who was known as the epitome of conservatism. His name was Bastion, and he wasn't a bad guy.

We had been in quite a few arguments, but he was pretty open-minded, and he had been giving me his support despite his views.

More importantly, he was a scholar and a soldier, so he was one of the few figures I thought would be really useful to me. Naturally, he wasn't on my list of people whom I wanted to eliminate.

Bastion's existence was proof that the Continental Protection Management Committee wasn't aiming for complete dictatorship, and he was also the suppressor who had helped me stay in control whenever I went on a rampage.

He taught me many things, and in the process of making the right sacrifices, I would often come to an even better conclusion. Anyway, he was now categorized as a necessary suppressor, and Bastion was probably the reason Lee Ji-Hye had prepared that rebuttal section in the document she made me read.

I glanced at Lee Ji-Hye, thinking that Bastion was definitely going to say something, and she nodded slightly before showing that document to me.

However, I couldn't hear anything.

'What's going on?'

I waited for people to say something, but no one questioned what I said. Even the

people who often talked about their kingdom's interests or complained about handing over the first operational authority were quiet. It seemed like they had agreed beforehand that they wouldn't oppose my idea.s

I glanced at them with a questioning look.

'No, don't be like this. Say something.'

They avoided my gaze.

'You've been talking about independence or whatever, so why are you avoiding my gaze? We argue often, but it's not like I hate you or anything… I won't give you a hard time for opposing this.

'We need people like you, and I need you to oppose this so that I can show you the material I prepared beforehand. Of course, nitpicking a little too much will annoy me a bit, but… we have a good relationship. Don't you agree?'

However, Bastion didn't dare to meet my gaze. He closed his eyes and gulped as if he had nothing to say. The courageous Bastion was nervous, even though he always had the gall to criticize when no one else was willing to object.

"Any other questions?" I asked.

The room was so quiet that one could hear a pin drop.

The host definitely noticed my astonishment.

He stood on the podium and said, "If there are no questions, we'll start the voting right away…"

I heard him talking about voting or whatever, but I couldn't really hear his voice because I was still in a daze. The people looked down at their hand mirrors, and the result that appeared on the large Goddess' Mirror was unanimous.

'Shit, what's going on? What the… '

"The first suggestion was passed unanimously. From now on, all forces, groups, and nations of the continent will be under the banner of the Continental Protection Management Committee until the state of war emergency is lifted. The entire

continent is now in a state of war emergency," the host declared.

Clap, clap, clap!

The crisp noises coming from their applause pricked my ears.

'Damn it... '

I couldn't help but get worried that history might remember me as a dictator.

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1. This dialogue was taken from a Korean drama called Emperor Wang Gun in a TV Series named Taejo Wang Geon ☜

CHAPTER 657
MEETING (3)

I wanted the meeting to proceed smoothly, but I didn't expect it to be *this* smooth. No, it would be an understatement to say that the situation was proceeding smoothly.

'From now on, the denizens of the continent must report to the Continental Protection Management Committee first before going to the bathroom.'

I was sure they would unanimously agree to that suggestion. It was kind of an exaggeration, but everyone had become so united that I became confident that they would unanimously agree to even the strangest nonsense out there. I was really satisfied by the fact that everyone was working together as one, but…

'Shit… '

"I declare that the suggestion has passed unanimously."

'This is too much.'

"I declare that the suggestion has passed unanimously."

'Shouldn't at least one person stand against it?'

"*Ah*, one person has abstained from voting for this suggestion…" the host announced.

'Yeah, that's what I'm talking about. Go ahead and abstain.'

"I-I accidentally pressed the wrong button. I'm… sorry. I agree! I agree! I agree no matter what!"

'You really didn't have to go out of your way to say that.'

"*Ah*, okay, in that case… I declare once again that the suggestion has passed unanimously," the host said.

'Nitpick something. Are all of you really going to stay quiet?'

"I declare that the suggestion has passed… unanimously."

The atmosphere was becoming strange, and even Lee Ji-Hye's satisfied look turned to that of surprise. She had suggested that I should become a bit more aggressive, but she probably never expected that things would proceed *this* smoothly.

She probably understood that this was no time to be happy because we were already worried about many things, and she was obviously worried about the results that this meeting would bring.

I was happy that everyone had united as one. I didn't need to worry about oppressing them with my power so that they wouldn't complain about anything, but the things I had learned and experienced so far kept on bothering me.

Anyway, no one would deny the fact that this kind of oppression would eventually backfire.

'Have I been worried about trivial things?'

The figures here could be considered to be the most influential and powerful figures on the continent. I felt like we could avoid the bad ending, considering our relationship with each other. Unfortunately, we weren't the only ones living on the continent.

We could ignore the public sentiment, but humans were social animals, and I was human. There was a reason I was afraid of being called a dictator.

In addition, the Chairman of National Defense, Lee Ki-Young, didn't really sound that great to my ears because I was also an Honorary Cardinal. Of course, that wasn't the extent of my worries.

These people were afraid, and that was exactly why they were quiet. It was possible that they actually wanted to oppose the suggestions I had brought up so far.

It seemed like they were thinking about the worst-case scenario, so they were naturally worried. We only had thirty-six days left, and if the leaders of each group were holding grudges…

'They might break down at the critical juncture… '

There was also a chance that some of them would take the side of those pigeons. Of course, it was difficult for me to understand why they would abandon humanity, but there were always scummy bastards out there who only cared about their own profits.

It was evidenced by those bastards who had taken the side of the demons in our previous lives. Of course, I didn't really think that people would say that my suggestions were bad.

'Shit, Doom Hyun-Sung.'

I didn't know what he did, but I was surprised by the fact that he did something like this.

'Why is this bastard being so rude all of a sudden?'

I knew why he had been treating Jo Hye-Jin badly. In fact, he even raised his hand against me and tried to hit me. Of course, he didn't really hit me, but his gaze told me that he would truly hit me if the worse became the worst.

I still couldn't forget his cold expression at the time.

I wasn't sure whether he had decided to live freely as Doom Hyun-Sung or if he had decided to throw all caution to the wind and decided not to care about the public's opinion or politics, but it was undeniable that he truly couldn't give a damn anymore.

'Alright, fine. I understand. It's about time you live the life you want to live.'

It was understandable, considering how much hardships he had endured for so many years due to politics. The political issues he had encountered in his past life had to have troubled him as much as the masked scum.

I was sure he wanted to do whatever he wanted, live whatever life he had been wanting to live, and ignore the people he disliked rather than listen to their trivial stories. It had to have also been frustrating for him to smile at those corrupted bastards.

He had to have realized that living such a subservient life was dumb. It could be said

that he had already joined the dark side, so I felt like he wanted to act like a delinquent high schooler.

Kim Hyun-Sung's evil energy was overflowing, and Kim Hyun-Sung probably believed that there wouldn't be any issues even if he removed the seal on his right arm and unleashed the Dark Flame Dragon[1] sealed inside of it. Still…

'That's a bit extreme.'

There was no need for him to use such an extreme method and force everyone into agreeing with every suggestion I would make. A pass would still be a pass, even if a few people had disagreed.

I couldn't help but think of Kim Hyun-Sung as a straight-A student going down the endless path of delinquency after getting a taste of it. It didn't really sound like a great example, but I felt like he had fooled me into marrying him.

It was like I had decided to give him my entire life after getting attracted to his sincerity and innocence, but he ended up becoming a drunkard with a bad personality.

Of course, it would be more apropos to say that Kim Hyun-Sung was drunk in darkness rather than liquor.

I gave another suggestion, and I looked around to see if anyone would oppose it.

However, they all agreed to my suggestion.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Be confident and reveal your thoughts to the Goddess' Chosen One. He needs your advice right now. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Bastion. No quest rewards were declared, so Bastion will not receive a reward.]

"…"

'What is this bastard doing? Hurry up and say something.'

However, he was still avoiding my gaze. I didn't know what to say because he was even ignoring the quest I sent.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Goddess Benigoa's Chosen One needs your help. He needs a wise and faithful advisor. Guide him to the right path. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Bastion. No quest rewards were declared, so Bastion will not receive a reward.]

If Bastion had already given up, my next target would be the priest. He would probably think that the god he was serving was talking to him, so there was a high chance that he would say something.

Bedriaro's holy power was saint-level, and he was a devout follower of Goddess Lauren. I stared at him with mild anticipation, but he avoided my gaze. He had always told me that he was willing to give his own life for the goddess, so what was this?

The others reacted the same. I sent out quests to several people, but none of them said anything. I could still remember how they raised their swords bravely during the 27th Legion incident, so I had no idea why they were so afraid of speaking.

I surreptitiously looked around and found a red stain on the floor.

It was bothering me for some reason.

'No, he's not that unreasonable. I'm sure it's a stain and nothing else.'

"The suggestion has passed… unanimously," the host announced.

Clap, clap, clap!

I thought they would provide constructive criticism if Kim Hyun-Sung weren't here. It was a good thing that it was about time for a recess. When the recess was announced, I headed over to the secret meeting location.

The secret meeting location was made just in case the meeting didn't go as smoothly as we were hoping, but it had gone so smoothly that I couldn't help but chuckle at

the thought that my goal was changed slightly because of Kim Hyun-Sung's interference.

Lee Ji-Hye immediately chased after me.

It seemed that she had also promised to meet some people.

"It's really shocking," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"You don't say," I commented.

"I came expecting a variety of situations, but… I didn't expect something like this to happen," she said.

"Same here, noona. I'm not sure if this is okay," I told her.

"I mean, it's not bad since things are going the way we want, but it's not exactly great… If I were asked which side I lean more toward, I would say the former. We obtained the first operational authority, and most of the issues had been handled.

"We can also say that the bastards who have to die are already dead. We're also going to take care of the biggest regions, so it's the end of our misfortunes and the start of our happiness," she explained.

"I agree, but… I don't feel too comfortable about this," I confessed.

"You worry too much, oppa. It's good to think about the worst-case scenario first, but… there shouldn't be an issue this time. You always act like this whenever the situation deviates slightly from your expectations.

"You're such a control freak, Oppa. I think your guild master has made up his mind, so think of it as stitching up a wound. If it rips, we can just stitch it up again," she complained.

"That doesn't sound like a good idea since it's going to rot," I commented.

"That's why we're on our way to apply a disinfectant," she said.

"…"

"…"

"You're right. I'll see you later, noona," I said.

"See ya."

She walked down the right hallway, so it became clear to me that she was about to meet up with the influential figures of the Republic. I fixed my clothes and started walking while tapping my thigh out of habit.

Eventually, I saw a terrace.

'They're still not here.'

I thought they would already be here, waiting for me, but I was mistaken. However, someone eventually entered the room. They were a man with thick eyebrows; he had a thin beard that ran from his cheek to his chin, and his passionate gaze that matched his face was engraved into my brain.

"It's been a while, Mr. Daniel," I greeted.

"Yes, it's… been a while, Chairman Lee Ki-Young," he greeted.

"Have you been doing well? I'm sorry for not contacting you more often. I should've contacted you earlier… I feel bad that we're meeting in situations like this," I apologized.

"No, I should be the one… who should apologize. I should've asked how you were doing… I'm really sorry… for not doing that," he said.

"Well, we were both busy. Let's not keep apologizing to each other like this. Let's talk about something that's more productive. We don't have a lot of time… I know this is sudden, but I'll get straight to the point. About our meeting today…" I trailed off.

"…"

"Was I too—"

"No. I don't know what's going on, and I don't know anything," he interrupted.

“What?”

“I-I believe… you’re correct, sir… so that’s why I agreed. I don’t have any other intention, so please don’t worry. The continent is in danger, right? At a time like this, we need to unite and work together. Of course, we must avoid unnecessary conflict as well. Everyone simply united as one because it’s the right thing to do,” Daniel explained.

“…”

“I—so the reason I’ve been opposing your opinion up until now was all for your sake… I’m sure that won’t happen, but—no, it definitely won’t happen. I was worried that you might end up walking down the wrong path, so I just want to tell you that I did it for you. I-I… definitely wasn’t trying to antagonize you,” he stuttered.

“…”

‘What’s wrong with him?’

“You seem a bit worked up… and kind of sick…” I told him.

“No, I’m fine. I’m fine, sir. *Haha, hahahaha*. I’m perfectly fine. I must’ve gotten a bit nervous at the thought of meeting you. I respect you a lot, after all,” he said.

“…”

“I hope you’ll tell the Guild Master of the Blue Guild that this is my true feelings—no, you must tell him,” he emphasized.

“…”

“Now, let’s head back to the meeting. My comrades agree with me, so you don’t have to worry about us opposing your suggestions. *Hahaha*, we must—we must protect the continent,” he reassured me.

I had nothing else to say. I thought the meeting was going to last at least three days, but it had only been half a day, and it was already about to end.

Actually, it didn’t even take that long, which surprised me.

I couldn't help but laugh when I saw those influential figures rushing out of the room as if they were running away. They looked like recruits trying to run out of the gas chamber.

And that was when I heard Kim Hyun-Sung next to me…

"I'm glad to see that you're doing well, Mr. Ki-Young. Have you eaten yet?"

"…"

"I'm glad the meeting went well," he said.

'Shit, this bastard is trying to play innocent.'

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1. A reference to the anime Chuunibyou demo Koi ga Shitai! ☜

CHAPTER 658
MEETING (4)

Kim Hyun-Sung looked as if he didn't want to talk about what happened here. It was like he was trying to change the subject. I wanted to ask him, but…

'There's no need for me to go out of my way to ask… '

If someone were to ask me about what I thought about this situation, I would say it was great. I initially thought about using three days for this meeting, but the meeting had ended so quickly that I could just use the remaining time I had allocated for the meeting to comfort the influential figures of the continent. I had to stitch up the wounds that weren't properly stitched and disinfect them.

'That's right… '

The suggestions I had made were passed unanimously, the foundation was kind of unstable, but it was there. I just had to pour some more cement and lay some bricks to secure it.

"Food…" I said.

"Yes!"

"*Ah*, I was actually about to go and eat. Since Miss Hye-Jin and Miss Ji-Hye came with me, I think it's best if we eat together. Would it be okay if I go and greet the members of the Democratic Country real quick?" I asked.

"Miss Hye-Jin as well?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"Yes, she came as my bodyguard," I replied.

"…"

"…"

“I see…” he muttered.

‘You don’t look so good, Hyun-Sung. Relax, man.’

“*Ah*, there’s something I heard…” I trailed off.

“Yes?”

“I think it’s best if you apologize to Miss Hye-Jin privately,” I continued.

‘You have to listen to me.’

He looked kind of surprised. It was as if he wasn’t expecting me to know—no, he wasn’t expecting me to be so blunt all of a sudden. He seemed to be thinking that Jo Hye-Jin had said something to me. I thought it would be a good idea to change the subject, but it was the best thing for me to tell him about his mistakes right away.

‘You and Miss Hye-Jin don’t have a normal relationship. You shouldn’t push her out like that just because she made a small mistake.’

“Miss Hye-Jin had her own reasons, and I’m the one who told her not to tell you. When Rafael captured me…” I trailed off.

“…”

“She told Rafael to take her hostage instead,” I continued.

‘You don’t remember anything? I’m sure you remember something.’

I believed this would trigger something in his memories.

I was sure he hadn’t forgotten the fact that Jo Hye-Jin had died for him in his past life…

No, there was a high chance that he had forgotten about it temporarily. He was under Doom Hyun-Sung’s influence at the moment, and he looked like he didn’t want to remember his past life. I was sure he thought that he didn’t really mean what he had said to Jo Hye-Jin.

As expected, Kim Hyun-Sung nodded. For some reason, I thought…

'Wow, am I Doom Hyun-Sung's suppressor?'

He seemed to be taking what I said just now really seriously.

It was nothing but an assumption, but he seemed capable of thinking rationally whenever he was around me.

I felt kind of bad for comparing him to a puppy, and comparing him to a ferocious dog seemed more apropos than a puppy.

He was like a ferocious dog that would make a mess in the house, run out to threaten the neighbors and even bite them. However, he would become like an emotionally stable puppy whenever his owner was before him.

Kim Hyun-Sung's behavior was irrational, but his gaze at the moment was more stable than the gazes of just about anyone I had ever met so far. Honestly, it felt like he didn't become Doom Hyun-Sung at all.

He used to be like a golden retriever, so I truly couldn't comprehend how he became so ruthless. Fortunately, it didn't seem like he was just pretending to be all nice in front of me.

'I'm sure of it.'

Kim Hyun-Sung was bad at acting, so he was definitely rational at the moment.

"Everyone is bound to make a mistake because no one is perfect. Based on my standards, Miss Hye-Jin simply did her best to complete her tasks. I can tell because she ran all the way to Lindel until she fell unconscious," I told him.

"I see…"

"I completely understand how you're feeling, but I'm sure it was hard for her as well. She doesn't deserve any criticism," I continued.

"I see…" he repeated.

'This might be easier than I thought… '

I was worried that I might have to come up with some silly plan again to get the two

to reconcile, but I could tell that he was reflecting on his actions. He was obviously thinking that he had made a mistake and had been rash.

I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung, and he nodded at me.

"It seems that I've… made a mistake," he said.

'Yeah, you made a mistake.'

"I should apologize," he said.

'Of course. Our Hyun-Sung is so nice. Good boy.'

"Then, please wait for me, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I'll join you as soon as I'm done talking to Miss Oscar," I told him.

"Okay."

I felt a bit happier, and I left him with a smile.

Soon, I saw Oscar and the Senators of the Sacred Democratic Country. It had been quite a while since I last saw them. There were many people who wanted to talk to me, but I had to prioritize Oscar and the senators.

I was happy to see their smiling faces as they walked up to me.

"Chairman Lee Ki-Young," Oscar greeted.

"It's been a while, Miss Oscar," I greeted back.

"It really has been a while, Mr. Lee Ki-Young," Senator Caitlyn said.

"*Hahaha*, it really has been a while. I can't even remember the last time we met. I'm sorry for not contacting you more often, Senator Caitlyn," I laughed.

"It should be us who should apologize. We actually feel bad about sending you messages since we know how busy you are…" Senator Elise said.

"You can message me anytime, Senator Elise. I sometimes exchange messages with Lady Marilyn, so don't worry and feel free to contact me anytime. *Ah!* Now that I

think about it, I heard that Lady Marilyn is running for the senator position…" I mentioned.

'The problem is that she sends me too many messages… '

"Unfortunately, she'll have to try again next time. It's difficult to hold a general election during a chaotic time like this…" Senator Caitlyn said.

"I see. It must be troubling for you," I commented.

"It's not as troubling as your work. You're working hard day and night for the continent… to the point that you're not taking care of your own health… *Whoo*…" she said and sighed worriedly.

"Mr. Lee Ki-Young has always been like that… I was hoping the others are aware of the sacrifice you've made for the continent so far… However, it seemed that I was mistaken," Senator Elise said.

"What?"

"Before the meeting began officially, many people said many things about you. They were questioning why you still hadn't done anything as the Chairman of the Committee, if you really fainted recently, and why you were so late for the meeting," she replied.

"Senator Elise!" Oscar yelled, startling Elise.

Elise looked as if she had made a mistake, and I had an idea why.

"Don't feel too hurt, sir," Oscar said.

"You don't have to worry about me, Miss Oscar. It's natural for them to think that way. I'm still lacking," I told her.

"That's not true. I know it's not right to judge whether a person's thoughts are right or wrong, but I can say this with confidence. They're wrong—the few people who think that way are wrong," she said.

"There must've been a bit of conflict," I commented.

"You can't even call it a conflict. Of course, a few people made those kinds of comments at the start, but everyone seemed to have understood— *Ah*, look at the time. It's a bit unfortunate; I wanted to talk more with you…" Oscar confessed.

"*Ah…*"

"We'll get going, Chairman Lee Ki-Young. And…" Oscar trailed off.

"Yes?"

"I'd like to treat you to a cup of tea soon…" she offered.

"I won't decline, Miss Oscar," I told her.

Aris smiled brightly at me. It seemed that she was thinking about how nice it would be if we could talk a bit longer. Senator Elise's outburst had taken quite a bit of time, so I thought Aris might hold a grudge against the former. Obviously, I wanted to thank Elise for her outburst, as it gave me a lot of information.

I was sure those who disliked Lee Ki-Young were the ones who had talked badly about me. They probably thought I was an excellent prey, as it had been quite a while since I showed up since that incident.

'He's the Chairman of the Continental Protection Management Committee, but geez! He still hasn't shown himself, even though it has been quite a while since that incident. I'm not sure if Chairman Lee Ki-Young is even worthy of that position.'

I figured that most of them had said something along the lines of that.

'I wonder if there's really something wrong with his health, and if something is wrong, I'm worried that… he might not be able to handle a situation this big. I'm definitely worried.'

Of course, they could have said something worse than that, like…

'It was a mistake to establish the Continental Protection Management Committee. He faints so often that one might think he's anemic… I think let's just pray.'

Actually, their remarks could still get worse.

'He has a history of selling his soul to a demon. Perhaps that foreign light is related to that form of him, and I even heard that he uses that form from time to time. Of course, I'm not saying it's Chairman Lee Ki-Young's fault, but… he should still be careful.'

The contingent of the Sacred Democratic Country probably failed to just stand by and watch.

'How dare you say that?! How could you say that to the hero who had saved the continent? Are you crazy?!'

'He was also once a demon that threatened the continent.'

'You crazy bastard!'

'This is a holy meeting room! Apologize right now! Apologize for what you just said!'

There was a high chance that they spoke such words if they had come here to bring me down. Things probably got too chaotic, and they probably eventually got too busy tearing each other down that a proper meeting couldn't be convened anymore.

I was sure their goal was chaos. They probably thought that they could make everyone forget the main reason behind this meeting. Their plan was actually pretty effective, and if they had succeeded, they would have continued to muddy the waters of the meeting.

However, Kim Hyun-Sung's actions were probably beyond their expectations. Kim Hyun-Sung had thrown all caution to the wind and had decided to live whatever life he wanted to live, so he definitely didn't just stand by and watch them spout bullshit.

He probably stood up slowly and…

'Guild Master of Blue, what are you doing? What do you think you're doing?'

The guards of those corrupted bastards probably stood up to block his path. The guards were definitely Legendary-rank adventurers, but Kim Hyun-Sung's killing intent was too heavy for just about anyone beneath his rank to withstand.

In the end, Kim Hyung-Sung walked over to the bastard who had started it all. He looked down coldly at the corrupted bastard and raised his hand before…

Crack!

'Shit, that scared me.'

I whipped around and found Kim Hyun-Sung. He had inadvertently stepped on an item that someone had dropped.

'Shit, I thought I was going to die of a heart attack.'

Kim Hyun-Sung stared shyly at me upon realizing that he had startled me.

"Looks like I scared you. I'm sorry, Mr. Ki-Young."

"No… it's fine," I said.

"I'm glad, but—*Ah!* I apologized to Miss Hye-Jin, just like you said. It was my fault… and I was a bit emotional at the time… so I ended up making a mistake. Thank you so much for pointing out my mistake. Thanks for the advice as well," he said.

"You don't… have to thank me for that…" I told him.

'He didn't hurt her or anything, right?'

"Well then, let's head outside," he suggested.

'No way. I'm sure that's not the case.'

"I'm sure you'll be satisfied," he added.

Kim Hyun-Sung looked too happy, so there was no way he caused trouble.

CHAPTER 659
THE CHANCES OF VICTORY (1)

The stained floor made me think that Doom Hyun-Sung's influence on Kim Hyun-Sung was more serious than I thought.

'I'll be sad if he really caused trouble… '

I was happy about the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung had punished those who had sinned against God and Man by tearing down the light of the continent through propaganda and fabrication, but getting rid of them where people couldn't see or without anyone knowing was the best way to do it.

If he had gotten so consumed by the darkness that he was no longer aware of his surroundings… I'd have to start thinking about pushing everything else aside and working on returning Kim Hyun-Sung to his original self.

Of course, I wouldn't do something that irrational just yet because I didn't know if returning him to his original self was even possible. If it was possible, it would be a task I wouldn't be able to complete in a short amount of time.

I needed a stage and story that was better than Park Deok-Gu's awakening or the Doom Ki-Young incident, and unfortunately, I didn't have the time and energy to do that.

I also didn't have many choices, as the stakes were incredibly high this time.

This era wanted Doom Hyun-Sung, not Kim Hyun-Sung. It bothered me that the power didn't belong to him, but his strength had increased significantly. It was a double-edged sword, but it was undeniable that he was a desirable trump card.

'I need to take Doom Hyun-Sung with me.'

Jung Ha-Yan was nerfed, so the buffed Doom Hyun-Sung was the only person I could rely on. I felt kind of uncomfortable about it, but I had to greet him with a smile because maintaining the status quo was the best option for me to take here.

“I’m looking forward to it. By the way, where’s Miss Hye-Jin and Miss Ji-Hye…” I asked.

Obviously, I was curious if Doom Hyun-Sung had actually apologized.

‘If he lied to me, I’ll say his condition is more serious than I thought… ’

I glanced to the side and saw Lee Ji-Hye and Jo Hye-Jin approaching us.

Jo Hye-Jin was all smiles

‘He did it… He hasn’t fallen that far yet.’

Jo Hye-Jin was trying her best to stop herself from smiling, but despite that, she couldn’t stop herself from giggling. I felt really relieved, but I was kind of surprised at the same time.

‘Jo Hye-Jin is really… ’

“…”

‘Jo Hye-Jin, you’re really pathetic. Just pathetic.’

“Here they come,” Kim Hyun-Sung said.

‘Seriously… ’

“Miss Hye-Jin seems to be feeling a lot better, so I’m really glad,” he said.

“Yes, it’s a relief,” I said in agreement.

“I was worried that my apology wouldn’t be enough…” he confessed.

‘Wait, Hye-Jin. Wasn’t this a golden opportunity for you to make Hyun-Sung feel bad?’

"I think she forgave me…" he added.

‘If you had pouted at least once, Hyun-Sung probably would have made time for you later. No, it’s not probably. I’m sure he would have done that.’

I shouldn't be thinking about this right now, but I felt sad because she had given up a golden opportunity twice.

'You should've reacted as if you were feeling a bit uncomfortable. That way, Hyun-Sung would have known that he had truly messed up. He would have given you more attention and would have taken better care of you…

'If I were in your shoes, I would be using that card against him for ten years at least.'

I was sure that Jo Hye-Jin had eagerly nodded and forgave Kim Hyun-Sung when he had apologized to her earlier. I was sure she felt a bit less burdened now after confirming that Kim Hyun-Sung had just been a bit too rash against her.

I knew she would make that kind of expression, but I was frustrated at the sight.

I wasn't exactly sure how Kim Hyun-Sung had apologized to her, but her expression told me that she wouldn't have any regrets even if she were to die right now.

'Why is she… '

People might think that someone had confessed to her rather than apologize.

'I am seriously… '

I wanted to bring Lee Ki-Yeon back and teach Jo Hye-Jin a thing or two.

"I'm sorry; I didn't disturb you two, right?" Jo Hye-Jin asked.

"It's fine since Miss Ji-Hye has been working hard as well. She helped me with many things and not just the recent incident," I told her.

"It's an honor. I know that not many people have been invited to eat with you," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"I'm sorry for not inviting you earlier," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"It's fine. It's not like we've been talking since the tutorial dungeon, and I was just doing my job. My job is to stand by Ki-Young oppa's side, so don't worry about it. I'm satisfied with my current job as well… Anyway, you've invited me, so I'll eat well," she told him.

"…"

"Thank you for the food, Mr. Hyun-Sung," she thanked him.

'You're really cheeky, noona.'

"By the way, today's meeting was kind of weird, huh?" she asked.

"…"

"I didn't think it would work out so easily…" she added.

'Noona, don't bring that up. I think Hyun-Sung is determined to keep that a secret.'

I decided not to think about it.

I gave Lee Ji-Hye *that* look, and she nodded as if telling me that she would stop talking. I signaled that she should stop talking about it so she probably wouldn't mention it anymore.

"I mean, does the reason really matter? All's well that ends well. Let's keep moving. You made reservations, but it's not good manners to be too late," she suggested.

"Yes, I think it's best if we head there like Miss Ji-Hye suggested. It's within walking distance, so let's take our time heading there. You too, Miss Hye-Jin," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"Okay, Guild Master," she answered.

Somehow, we ended up sitting in pairs. Now that I thought about it, this pairing was kind of strange. This was the first time Jo Hye-Jin, Kim Hyun-Sung, Lee Ji-Hye, and I had done something together, so I found it surprising that the air about us was friendly rather than weird.

Of course, Lee Ji-Hye was the biggest contributor to the atmosphere around us, while Kim Hyun-Sung was a lot friendlier toward her than I thought.

'His evaluation of her must've gone up.'

It didn't seem like he was simply expressing his gratitude toward Lee Ji-Hye for

delivering important information during the kidnapping case. It felt like he thought of Lee Ji-Hye as my adjutant.

I was thankful for her as well. In fact, if she weren't here with me, I would have had a really serious health problem. I would have been in bed rather than here.

Anyway, I was a bit sad about how Jo Hye-Jin was still drunk on the warmth that Kim Hyun-Sung had shown her earlier. To be honest, I was starting to get a headache because I couldn't find a way to get her and Kim Hyun-Sung together.

We had a good time while talking about silly things. Even though the majority of the conversations were silly topics, I couldn't help but listen to the question that Lee Ji-Hye had asked Kim Hyun-Sung.

"By the way, the fact that we don't have a lot of time left is a really big problem. What do you think about this, Mr. Hyun-Sung?"

It was a sensitive question for Kim Hyun-Sung, but it didn't take long for him to answer.

"For now, I think we should do whatever we can. First, we need to organize things and make sure we're prepared. I was kind of surprised, but… for some reason, I did think we wouldn't have that much time left."

"*Hm*, that's kind of… surprising," she commented.

"I can also feel… the thing that's in there," he added.

"That's definitely surprising. So, what's inside there?" she asked.

"The enemy," he replied.

"…" "…"

"How strong are they?" she questioned.

"Strong," he answered.

"Do we have a chance?" she asked.

“I can’t say that we’re fully prepared, but… it already happened, so we can’t back down now,” he said.

“Do you have a secret plan or something? You seem pretty calm about it, considering you already knew about this…” she said.

“I’m just doing what I can because I worked hard in a very short amount of time,” he told her.

“Can I ask how much of a chance we have?” she asked.

“Well, in my personal opinion…” he trailed off.

“…”

“About ten percent,” he said.

“…”

“What?”

“If we get lucky, it’s fifteen percent. I think…” he told her.

Kim Hyun-Sung sounded like it wasn’t a big deal, but Lee Ji-Hye looked kind of shocked.

She knew Kim Hyun-Sung wasn’t the type to talk nonsense, so she probably believed Kim Hyun-Sung. I was also surprised because I never really talked to him about our chances of victory against the Outer God and its pigeons.

‘Really?’

“I was being really optimistic when I said that,” he said.

‘No, I’m sure our chances aren’t that *low. We’ve been working hard.’*

I glanced at Lee Ji-Hye, and she was already deep in her thoughts.

I was convinced that she was already on Noah’s Ark.

'Oppa, let's just cut ties.'

I imagined her saying that to me.

'This is kind of shocking… '

I thought we would have at least a thirty-percent chance.

Lee Ji-Hye soon stood up. She wiped her mouth with a napkin with a noticeably cold expression.

"I'm going to the bathroom," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"…"

"Come with me, Miss Hye-Jin," she requested.

"What?"

"I said, come with me," she repeated.

"I'm… okay," Jo Hye-Jin told her.

"Come with me," she requested again.

"Do I have to—"

"Come with me," she interrupted.

"*Oh*, okay."

Jo Hye-Jin stuttered, seemingly startled by the strange, oppressive aura that Lee Ji-Hye was emitting. Obviously, Lee Ji-Hye didn't stand up because she wanted to go to the bathroom with her. This was probably her way of telling me to check whether Kim Hyun-Sung was telling the truth or not.

She wanted to hear an answer right now, so it became clear that she wanted to know if *that* was really our only option.

I cast a soundproofing spell and started talking.

“Is it true?” I asked.

“Yes. It’s impossible to fight them considering the current prowess of the continent’s forces.” Kim Hyun-Sung responded.

“But still, the probability is too low—”

“I simply told you the truth,” he interrupted.

‘Ah, shit. Does that mean that we really need to get on Noah’s Ark?’

I took Kim Hyun-Sung’s words seriously. I thought it wouldn’t be a bad idea to abandon everything right now and refine the Noah’s Ark plan a bit more.

Abandoning both Benigoa and the continent before taking off to the skies on the ship that Park Deok-Gu had made was probably our best choice at the moment.

I imagined people staring at us in a daze by then, and I imagined myself shouting at them, “Goodbye, everyone! I’m leaving to search for my happiness, so I’ve decided to abandon all my burdens.”[1]

Wouldn’t it be better for history to remember me as an asshole than to die an asshole?

Actually, there was no way I’d be able to leave my name in history by then.

‘The continent itself will get annihilated, so there won’t be any history left.’

I thought perhaps I was being a bit indecisive, but I started leaning toward the Noah’s Ark plan. Ten percent was just too low. I looked up and noticed Kim Hyun-Sung’s worried gaze; it seemed that I failed to control my expression.

“…”

“…”

“Don’t worry. I’ll do my best to protect the continent just as you wished,” he said.

‘Can you keep that ‘do my best’ part to yourself for a couple more days?’

Kim Hyun-Sung's gaze looked more serious than ever.

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1. This is a Korean meme based on the anime called Inuyasha. ☜

CHAPTER 660
THE CHANCES OF VICTORY (2)

'Shit, this isn't good… '

It was great that Kim Hyun-Sung had that kind of determination, but it made me fall into deep contemplation and tap on my thigh. I couldn't help but think if there were really no other solutions.

Unfortunately, the fact that Kim Hyun-Sung was determined wouldn't really increase the odds of our victory. In addition, I wasn't really the type to gamble. I was the type who would only gamble if my chances of victory were over seventy percent.

I also preferred going all-in only if I was fully prepared for it.

In other words, Kim Hyun-Sung's remark about how our chances of victory were only ten percent was enough to shake my determination to protect the continent. Of course, I still had to check if what he said was true, but…

'No, it's too early to give up. We already have an escape route, and I can cut off ties anytime.'

I wasn't sure how much I could increase our chances of victory in just thirty-six days, but it wasn't like the world would end right away after the thirty-six days were up. We could increase our chances of victory in the middle of battle.

'Ah, I think Lee Ji-Hye is already thinking about running away… '

She wasn't a gambler either, so it was highly likely that she was seriously filling out the list of ten people who would be getting onto Noah's Ark with her. I could bet everything I had that she was writing that list in the bathroom.

"How is it compared to your past life?" I asked.

"Before comparing the overall growth of the continent, I'd like to say that things are moving too fast. Around this time in my past life, we haven't figured out their

existence yet," Kim Hyun-Sung answered.

"How does our power compare to theirs?" I questioned.

"We're ridiculously weaker compared to them. Of course, we've gotten stronger, and I'd say that the current situation is better than my past life since we also discovered new great talents like Tamer Alps.

"Our supplies are a lot more stable, and the potions you've made will drastically decrease the number of casualties. We also can't ignore the fact that we've kept humanity together and prevented them from dividing and fighting each other.

"Unfortunately, there are things that we don't have, and they're beyond what we are lacking," he replied.

'You're not exaggerating based on your memories, are you? Even if that's the case, it's still too low. Ten percent is just too low that it's ridiculous. You're Doom Hyun-Sung, not Kim Hyun-Sung.'

I started thinking that perhaps he was mistaken. Compared to the warriors who had fought to the death, I was sure we weren't that strong, but it had been quite a while since I started managing the continent, so his evaluation truly astonished me.

Perhaps he had overlooked the fact that the enemy had collaborators in his past life.

The masked scum had instilled fear into mankind using vicious and cruel methods. It was also highly likely that Jin Cheong gave many gifts to those pigeons. His title was Sage on the Battlefield, and his job was Legion Mage.

He was incredibly good at deceiving people around him and jumping around the battlefield as if it were his playground rather than crushing his opponents in a head-on confrontation.

The masked scum's disappearance didn't mean that the pigeons would be weaker compared to the pigeons in Kim Hyun-Sung's past life. However, it meant that their strategies wouldn't be *that* complicated.

'This is big.'

I was still alive as well, and I could make a big difference. I wasn't trying to brag, but

the existence of the tactical genius Light Ki-Young, who had strategically brought Jin Cheong down, should be more than enough to bolster humanity's chances of victory to over ten percent.

"In this life—"

"Yes, he's dead, but… I'm not talking about tactics and strategy," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"…"

"I'm talking about pure power," he said.

"…"

"More importantly…" he paused.

"Yes?"

"The growth level of the named adventurers will drop a lot," he continued.

"Named adventurers?" I asked.

"Yes. To be exact, our biggest problem is that we don't have named adventurers capable of fighting the Four Angels. I recall telling you about this…" he answered.

"Yes, I remember."

Among the pigeons that worked under the Outer God, there were four pigeons with extraordinary strength. They were like the Four Heavenly Kings. They were so powerful that they could be categorized into tactical pigeons.

The Four Angels were so tough that humanity only managed to take down two of them at a massive expense.

'Now I understand why Kim Hyun-Sung said we only have a ten percent chance… '

Tactics, strategy, supplies, and conditions weren't the main issues here.

It would probably be easier to understand if I said that they had four Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung. Kim Hyun-Sung could fight them, but he could only protect one cardinal

direction, as he was only one person, after all.

I would be the commander, but I wouldn't be able to do anything other than stare at the battlefield. Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung was an irregular and gifted fighter who couldn't be suppressed with ordinary methods.

What would happen if I were to take some elementary school kids and tell them to fight Park Deok-Gu? Would Park Deok-Gu need tactics and strategy against elementary school kids?

It was a bit exaggerated, but it was undeniable that fighting those pigeons without our current overall prowess would be like throwing ourselves to a pack of wolves.

'All of it is just useless bullshit.'

If we wanted to stand a chance against them, we needed to be on the same level, at the very least. If the pigeons possessed four tactical nukes, then we should also have—no, at least a way to suppress those tactical nukes.

"In your past life…"

"I was tasked to handle one of them, and the chosen warrior was tasked to handle another one," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

'So that's why they were able to take down two.'

I couldn't help but get angry at Benigoa.

The guy who was supposed to be the chosen warrior ended up getting ripped to shreds by the Agwis in the tutorial dungeon because he failed to obtain the holy sword.

To make matters worse, the chosen warrior of the gray light was currently on the brink of death.

I was hoping that Rafael would recover, but there was a high chance that he wouldn't be able to fight, even if he were to recover. The same went for his party members.

The life extension support device was helping Lee Joo-Hyuk and the Miracle Priest stay alive. We were supporting the heroes of the first life both physically and

spiritually because it was difficult to find someone as skilled as Lee Joo-Hyuk and the others.

'It's over for the continent. Shit, it's all over... '

[A Rare-rank Forced Quest has been activated.]

[Grow sprouts of hope with Benigoa. (0/1)]

[Reward: A four-leaf clover seed of hope given by the goddess herself.]

'Please go away... '

[A Rare-rank Forced Quest has been activated.]

[You can do it… I'm sure you can do it, Father Lee Ki-Young. You've done well up until now. Rather than giving up now, wouldn't it be better to think positively? We even gave you power. O-Of course, I'm not sure how helpful it'll be… (0/1)]

'Alright, just be quiet, damn it. I haven't abandoned you yet.'

"When you mentioned that we have a ten percent chance…" I said.

"Our chances of victory are still around ten percent, even if I carry my role out perfectly," Kim Hyun-Sung said.

"I think we can increase it a bit more," I commented.

'You know that I know about you better than you know yourself, right? If we train the Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung, I'm sure our chances will increase by two folds.'

"…"

'What's with that face? You're not thinking about abandoning Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung, are you?'

That was the feeling I got from his gaze and expression.

'Wow, shit… Kim Hyun-Sung, you bastard… '

His uncertain expression made me think that he didn't want to burden me. He definitely didn't even consider adding me into the equation, which had to be the reason he came up with ten percent.

I felt happy and uncomfortable at the same time.

He was determined to lead the war without burdening me too much. Obviously, I felt like he was trying to push me aside when it mattered. I understood that he was being considerate of me, but it didn't make me happy.

'Alright, fine. So you're going to leave the walkie-talkie and head to the battlefield by yourself, is that it? Go ahead. I have a Telescope, and I can give quests, so it doesn't matter if you take the walkie-talkie with you or not. Let's see if you don't turn into Tactical Kim Hyun-Sung when I give you the order.'

He would definitely follow the quests. There was no way he would reject temptations, especially if those temptations had come from me. I was sure he would do it while biting his lips. With our efficiency in mind, our chances would double, making it 20 percent. If I were to include my current prowess to the overall equation, it would mean adding another 5 percent, which meant a total of 25 percent. Our chances of victory with all that in mind would be twenty-five percent.

'It's still low.'

However, it was greater than what Kim Hyun-Sung had told me.

Unfortunately, we still had to find a way to stop the tactical nukes of those pigeons.

"What if we can keep those four named angels at bay?" I asked.

"Our chances of victory will increase exponentially, but…" Kim Hyun-Sung trailed off.

'I know. The problem is that we don't have anyone capable of doing that.'

"Miss Ha-Yan might be able to do it," he continued.

'We can't use Jung Ha-Yan.'

"But I know she has things she needs to take care of," he said.

I couldn't use Jung Ha-Yan against one of the Four Heavenly Kings. Her role was to stabilize the entire party. She also had things she needed to do at the beginning of the battle, so deploying her wasn't an option

"Also… even if Miss Ha-Yan can fight, I can't say for sure if she's strong enough to keep one of them at bay," he added.

"Ha-Yan is definitely a rearguard," I commented.

"No, it's not a problem or being a vanguard or rearguard. Miss Ha-Yan changed a lot compared to her past life. If she had a few more years, she might've been able to grow as strong as her past life, but currently… she lacks many things," he explained.

'Does she really lack that much?'

I knew she lacked a lot, but I didn't expect to hear it from Kim Hyun-Sung.

"I think the reason Miss Ha-Yan could use her signature single-target destructive spells in her past life was that she wasn't skilled at using massive AoE destructive spells back then.

"Anyway, the gap between the two versions is huge. The current Jung Ha-Yan lacks mana, specialty, creativity, and efficiency. These are all necessary for a mage to reach the apex of their job. It's one of the reasons I told you that our chances of victory are ten percent," he explained.

"Right now, she has enough—"

"Back then, Miss Ha-Yan managed to teleport the entire Sacred Democratic Country away," he interrupted.

"What?"

"It would probably be easier to understand if I told you that she changed the topography of the entire continent," he replied.

'What the… '

"She blocked the majority of the enemies' ranged artillery spells, and she turned quite a few doomed battlefields in our favor. She even teleported the ocean to the

continent, turning land battles into naval battles.

“If it hadn’t been for Miss Ha-Yan, we wouldn’t have even attempted to fight them. She was definitely stronger than me back then,” he continued.

‘What?’

She changed the topography of the continent?

‘She turned land battles into naval battles?’

Did that mean that she was a god… in her past life?

[A Rare-rank Forced Quest has been activated.]

[No, we can’t even do that. To be exact, we can do it, but it’s a complicated process that requires asking for a ton of information. We also need to break through the… restraints, and it consumes a lot of holy power. More importantly, it does more harm than good… A long time ago, a certain senior of mine tried to split the ocean, and they almost went bankrupt. (0/1)]

‘Please be quiet.’

I couldn’t help but think that perhaps I had been underestimating the Jung Ha-Yan of our past lives.

CHAPTER 661
THE CHANCES OF VICTORY (3)

I was aware of the intricacies of the Mage job as I started out as a mage. In other words, I was aware of just how difficult it would be to achieve what Kim Hyun-Sung had mentioned during yesterday's dinner. Jung Ha-Yan had achieved things humans couldn't achieve, and it was no exaggeration to say that Jung Ha-Yan's might was comparable to the gods and goddesses up above in her previous life.

The dignity and authority she was exuding made my jaws drop. She was experienced when it came to large AoE destructive spells, but her current achievements were lacking compared to what she had achieved in her past life.

I finally understood why Kim Hyun-Sung was desperate to find Jung Ha-Yan as soon as he regressed and how mankind managed to withstand the masked scum's machinations.

It finally became obvious why Jin Cheong had gone out of his way to get rid of her.

And it also finally made sense why Jin Cheong had made her take her own life. The answer was simple—Jung Ha-Yan was simply unkillable on the battlefield. All mages looked up to her. In fact, even scholars and alchemists were looking up to her.

I was sure that putting a limit on Jung Ha-Yan was a stupid thing to do because magic was her hobby, her favorite thing to do, and her only friend. If the evil masked scum hadn't interfered, she would have grown just a bit more.

Her spells were powerful, and the stalking spells she had created during her free time were spells that I wouldn't have been able to see if it weren't for Mind's Eye. Actually, Kim Hyun-Sung and the powerful mages of the continent couldn’t sense it.

Honestly, I wasn't sure if I even knew every single spell she could use. Anemone’s Eye wasn’t nearby, but she could have created a personal Telescope spell to watch me right now.

‘Thinking about that does give me the chills.'

I cast a nervous gaze upon Jung Ha-Yan, and I saw her focusing on something in a tiny room. It looked like it had been quite a while since she last washed up. Actually, it made sense for her to be that dedicated while studying.

- I'm going to kill her. I'm going to kill her. I'm going to k-k-kill her.

'...'

- P-P-Park Mijin. I have to kill her. I have to kill her n-n-n-no matter what. She has to die.

The way she kept scribbling with her pen made her look like a genius mathematician whom one could only see in movies. I wasn't sure what kind of magic she was researching, but her growth seemed inevitable.

'Her magic stats have increased as well.'

It was surprising that her magic stat increased in less than a day, but even when taking that into account, all I could talk about was how much time we lacked. It was like we were now standing at the starting line.

I sighed out of frustration.

Lee Ji-Hye looked at me and asked, "Running away is the only answer, right?"

"No, noona. I told you we have about a twenty-five percent chance," I replied.

"It's too low for me to bet on. Of course, I'll pretend to do my best, but I'm prepared to escape anytime. While we're talking about it, there's one more person I would like to take away with me. Ten people is just too little," she said.

"That's fine. We honestly can't afford it, but… one person should be fine," I commented.

"That's good to hear," she said.

"So, have you done any simulations?" I asked.

"Yeah, I tried it with your son, Max. You want to know how much stats Jung Ha-Yan needs to fill the entire Western Solzir Hill with seawater and how much seawater she

can conjure with her current stats, right?" she asked.

"Did you get the results?" I questioned.

Lee Ji-Hye showed me her Goddess' Hand Mirror.

[34.3%]

"I don't recall talking about this plan… and I'm sure you're not trying to play pirates at the hill… You're not trying to create another Noah's Ark without telling me, are you?" she asked.

"I'm just trying to see Ha-Yan's progression," I told her.

"If she has to be able to fill the entire place with seawater just so she would become relevant, then it seems that she's truly too weak at the moment. Also, Isn't it pretty much impossible to increase your stats by more than twofold?" she questioned.

"It doesn't have to be more than twofold. Every tenth stat increase will give her additional stat points. With that in mind, her stats just have to increase by twenty points, and the bonuses will do the rest. If we include her Intelligence into the equation, it should be possible…" I muttered.

"Are you sure we have a chance?" Lee Ji-Hye questioned.

"I'm not sure," I replied.

'Honestly, I think it'll be impossible.'

"It might be better to abandon the first battle. If you're waiting for her to grow, you need to see the bigger picture. You remember the time you were captured by the demons, right? She experienced tremendous growth back then, and that's when she learned Teleportation.

"What do you think about locking her up and making her grow even stronger as much as possible at the cost of sacrificing half of humanity during the first battle? We only have thirty-six days—I mean, thirty-five days now, right?

"It's impossible to achieve that within thirty-five days. I'm thinking she'll get there in a few months, but who knows? If you let them kidnap you during the battle, she

might even summon an entire planet to crash down on top of those pigeons," she suggested.

"I thought about doing that, but… Ha-Yan isn't the only problem," I answered.

"How about getting away from all the pain and suffering? Let's just get on Noah's Ark," she said.

"I was thinking about it before you started nagging me. I'm just trying to see how I can use the remaining thirty-five days. The official announcement…" I paused.

"I'm trying to delay it as much as possible because people will obviously panic if we tell them that the continent will be in danger in thirty-six days. It's also been a while since I made the media stay quiet…

"It's the same for the people who were in the conference room yesterday. They've been staying quiet even without my instructions, and it feels really nice," she explained.

"You scheduled it, right?" I questioned.

"No, they all declined. They said you didn't have to come and that if you called for them, they would come themselves. I also thought we needed to make a few adjustments, but the leaders of some of the regions seem to think differently. Still, I made a list of people who seemed anxious, so if needed, I think you should comfort them," she suggested.

"*Ugh…*"

"Did you guys talk about anything else yesterday?" she asked.

"I told you everything we talked about. After you left with Hye-Jin to go shopping, we drank a glass of wine, and when I returned home, I worked on the manual… I just worked afterward. I honestly couldn't do anything else because I was kind of shocked as well…" I answered.

"You seem to be thinking that I went shopping because I wanted to. I intentionally left so that you two can comfortably talk about important matters. Miss Hye-Jin seemed a bit disappointed. She seemed like she was thinking that it was her chance," she said.

“Chance? Chance… my ass…” I muttered.

“Still, she’s cute. She has no idea that she has zero chance… Have I not told you before? It’s really annoying when the person receiving the apology lowers their head and apologizes back to the person…

"When I saw Jo Hye-Jin, I knew she didn’t have a chance. By the way… are you really going to do it?” she asked.

“I’m going to try once everything has been taken care of… Kim Hyun-Sung is easy to seduce. He’s just on edge right now because he’s going through some things, but once he returns to his old self after this is over, it’ll be fine. Jo Hye-Jin will go as an avatar, and if she approaches him with sincerity, it’ll be over in one night,” I answered.

“I guarantee that it won’t end. I worked really hard in the tutorial dungeon to seduce him… I’m sure that bastard is a eunuch,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Want to bet?” I questioned.

“Over getting Jo Hye-JIn and Kim Hyun-Sung together? Fine, let’s bet. If I win, let’s use the fairies. You can be Lee Ki-Yeon, and I’ll be Lee Ji-Hoo. I don’t care what you bet on,” she requested.

“Don’t regret it,” I warned her.

“I could say the same thing,” she said.

‘Why is she so confident?’

“…”

Obviously, I was bothered by the fact that she was so confident. Of course, I didn’t think I was going to lose, but that unnecessary confidence scared me a bit. I couldn’t take back what I said, and Lee Ji-Hye would mock me if I were to back down at this point.

‘Man, why do I keep wanting to back down?’

I knew I shouldn’t back out for the sake of Jo Hye-Jin’s honor, but I decided to let it

slide for now.

I looked outside while trying to think of a way to change the subject.

Lee Ji-Hye started talking, and she sounded regretful.

“So… where are you headed now?”

“It’s obvious,” I replied.

Lee Ji-Hye knew, but she asked me anyway.

“I have other problems besides Ha-Yan,” I added.

“*Ah*, right. You have *that* to take care of,” she said.

I had one more issue I needed to take care of besides Jung Ha-Yan.

“You’re trying to keep it balanced,” she commented.

“That’s right,” I said.

I wasn’t sure if it was going to work, but it was worth a try. If I had to pick a candidate, I was sure Kim Hyun-Sung would think of the same person as me.

There was still someone strong enough to block the enemies' tactical nukes.

Rafael was currently out of commission, so she could be considered the continent's second-strongest individual at the moment.

She had gone missing in our first lives, so her whereabouts were basically unknown. I wasn't sure how she disappeared without leaving even a single trace, but I had my own deductions. It was either she left due to a personal affair, or she had fallen into the masked scum's trap.

It felt like it had been a while since I came here. As soon as I got off the carriage with Lee Ji-Hye, I saw a large castle at the advanced base.

‘This is so like you, noona.’

I heard that she was going to build a temporary guild house at the base, but I didn't think that it was going to be this big. Who would think that this was a temporary camp? The Red Mercenary's temporary Guild House looked like the palace of a small kingdom.

"Welcome to the Red Mercenary. It's been a while, Chairman Lee Ki-Young," Choi Young-Ki greeted.

"*Ah*, yes… Mr. Choi Young-Ki. It really has been a while. You've changed a lot," I commented.

"A lot of time has passed since our last meeting. It's been a while since I've seen you as well, Miss Lee Ji-Hye," he said.

"Yes, it's been a while, Mr. Young-Ki. I heard you got a promotion, so I feel bad that you came out here to meet us like this," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"Miss Cha Hee-Ra ordered me to bring you personally. She seemed happy because it's been a while since you visited her," he informed.

"She must not be happy to see me," she pouted.

"*Haha*, I'm sure that's not the case. The Red Mercenary always welcomes guests, especially people like you, Miss Lee Ji-Hye," he laughed.

"Are you recruiting me?" she questioned.

"Of course not. I don't want the Guild Master of the Black Swan to hate me. Let's head in, sir," he suggested.

"Thank you again for coming out to see us," I said.

"It's actually an honor for me. Being able to serve you is an honorable task that only a few members of the Red Mercenary can carry out," he said.

'Well, that's… '

"If you feel uncomfortable about anything or need to get something done while you're here, please let me know anytime," he informed me.

“Okay.”

‘I’d expect nothing less from the Red Mercenary.’

I wasn't sure if it was because it had been quite a while since I was here, but everything looked fresh in my eyes.

The Blue Guild had already reached the moon, but the Red Mercenary Guild was still the powerhouse of Lindel. The number of members and the overall size of the two guilds were markedly different from each other.

Seeing the well-trained vanguards standing in line or the sight of men and women dueling each other made me think that they were a group of tough mercenaries. My noona was standing at the top of all this.

I couldn't help but remember our first meeting as I was being guided to her room rather than her office. The two mercenaries standing at the door bowed, and the large door was soon opened.

The second-strongest individual on the continent at the moment and the only one capable of suppressing those pigeons' tactical nukes aside from Kim Hyun-Sung and Rafael smiled at me with her lion-like messy red hair.

“Are you good at it?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

It seemed that she was also reminded of our second meeting.

CHAPTER 662
THE CHANCES OF VICTORY (4)

"You came here by yourself? Something must have happened," said Cha Hee-Ra.

“I'm here because I missed you,” I told her.

“You’re really good at saying things I want to hear. Sit there, and you can sit there as well. *Um…”* she trailed off.

“I’m Lee Ji-Hye, Mercenary Queen,” Lee Ji-Hye introduced herself.

“I know. Hey, bring some tea. Actually, you want alcohol? You like to drink, right?” she asked.

The door was flung open when Cha Hee-Ra gave the order, and a few guild members started bringing stuff inside the room. They weren’t as big as Park Deok-Gu, but guys with large frames were carefully setting up a table with drinks and snacks.

I could never get used to this sight. One of them had lost an ear, while another was riddled with knife wounds.

They looked at me as if it was an honor to serve me. It didn’t really matter to me, but it definitely wasn’t something one could see every day. One could only see this in the Red Mercenary Guild.

Lee Ji-Hye was also walking on eggshells around Cha Hee-Ra, which was unlike her usual self. I had seen her study people’s reactions, but I had never really seen her act like this. I was sure she realized that something was wrong. Of course, I understood Lee Ji-Hye’s feelings. For some reason, Cha Hee-Ra…

‘Makes people walk on eggshells around her.’

It was probably because of her experience on the continent and her strength, or it could simply be because of her personality. However, I was sure it was the latter.

She was born to be a queen and at the summit.

There was a saying about how kings and royalty weren't born, but no one would change their mind upon casting their gaze on Cha Hee-Ra.

I just couldn't imagine Cha Hee-Ra kneeling to someone, and I definitely couldn't imagine her begging. I also couldn't imagine her losing to someone, and that was exactly why she was in her current position.

'I'm sure it's possible.'

The word *powerful* didn't make me think of either Kim Hyun-Sung or Jung Ha-Yan first.

'You can do it, right, noona?'

"So, what did you want to talk to me about, darling?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"So… *Um*…" I paused.

"That's quite a long pause," she remarked.

A small and unexpected issue had just occurred.

I couldn't measure her exact power.

I often looked at her status window using Mind's Eye, and I knew that her job was a mercenary-type job. In other words, she could wield many weapons to great mastery.

However, I never really saw her wield a weapon aside from a few times.

Yes, she barely used a weapon despite her job trait and her Advanced Dual Weapon Knowledge. She preferred using her bare hands, and it was enough to propel her to the top of the continent.

'Well, she has a Berserker set.'

I could still remember how Cha Hee-Ra had paralyzed an entire battlefield with that set during the war against the Republic. During the 27th Legion incident, she was a

commander at the time, so she couldn't equip her armor and go ham.

Regardless, she was still extremely strong at the time.

With that thought in mind, wouldn't it be better to just be frank and ask?

I was a bit wary about the idea, but I decided to ask, “Noona, how strong are you?”

“*Hm…”* Cha Hee-Ra paused.

“…”

“…”

‘Shit. Maybe I shouldn’t have asked.’

“…”

“…”

Lee Ji-Hye glanced at me as if she couldn't believe that I had just asked Cha Hee-Ra such a sensitive question without any build-up. She looked like she was questioning my intention. It didn't really matter to me, but she might get caught up in a weird situation.

Obviously, the room was silent.

Two minutes later, Cha Hee-Ra answered while smiling, “Well, I think I’m pretty strong.”

“How strong?” I questioned.

“I don’t think I’ll lose no matter who I fight… Do you remember what I told you last time?” she asked.

Of course, I still remember her words at the time.

"It means that I didn’t really know how to get stronger. Training like a nerd is pretty useless."

She definitely said something like that.

"Have you ever seen a beast train, Darling? Have you seen them practice or learn how to swing their claws or bite? I changed my method to release the desire that filled my head. I'll eat and shit well. I decided to live like a beast."

She said that as well.

"I remember, and it looks like it paid off," I replied.

I couldn't really call it a training method, but it had to have been pretty effective, as her stats had increased significantly. Her Strength was already out of this world, and it had become even more absurd. Meanwhile, her Agility and Magic, which were pretty low, couldn't be considered low anymore.

"Honestly, it wasn't a big achievement. I've been able to unleash my desires, and it's all thanks to you. If I'm still dissatisfied, I would go into the forest and just destroy everything. I'm not sure why you're asking such a provoking question, but I can tell you this with certainty…" she trailed off and stared at me.

"…"

"I'm strong," she added.

"…"

"And…" she paused.

"Yeah?"

"I can become even stronger," she said.

"…"

I had nothing to say except…

'Shit, noona. You're so fuckin' cool!'

I had been wanting to hear her say that. I was worried because I had no other choice aside from her, but I was no longer worried. I finally understood why the strong

warriors of Lindel had all decided to join the Red Mercenary Guild.

“So, why did you ask that question?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“There’s something I would like you to do,” I answered.

I glanced at Lee Ji-Hye. She nodded and started speaking. It wasn’t anything important. It was about dealing with the Outer God and fighting the Four Heavenly Kings. I couldn't move together with the Red Mercenary Guild, so she had to be on standby.

Cha Hee-Ra nodded when she was told that this was going to be a long conversation. It was true, but it seemed that she was willing to listen, as the upcoming war was important to her as well.

“The Guild Master of the Blue Guild and you will have to take on one each. We’ll set the stage, so you don’t have to worry about anything else. I’m sure it’s going to be uncomfortable, but during the remaining thirty-five days… I recommend that you fight as a member of the Continental Protection Management Committee.

"We'll have many things to do, from checking your condition to coming up with a strategy, so I hope you’ll understand. We know that you’re strong, and we have no intentions of denying it, but we do need to get the exact data,” Lee Ji-Hye explained.

“*Hm…*”

“The command center believes that we have about a 23.4 percent chance of victory. We got this result through simulations using the current manual as well as the estimated power of our enemies.

"Under the assumption that you'll agree to follow the Continental Protection Management Committee’s plan, I believe our chances of winning will increase a bit more. I’d appreciate it if you could take a look at the current data and make your decision,” she continued.

‘You’re doing great.’

“This is the exact training schedule for the next thirty-five days. It’s more of a tactical training than personal training. We've simulated a number of instances, and I’m sure you’ll be really satisfied with this. Of course, there's more—”

“I think you left something out,” Cha Hee-Ra interrupted.

“What?”

‘Actually, Ji-Hye noona. I take back what I said. I think we made a mistake.’

Little by little, I felt the atmosphere change. To be exact, the air in the large room was starting to bore down on our shoulders.

‘I think we left something out. What should we do?’

Now that I thought about it, it had been quite a while since I saw Cha Hee-Ra looking annoyed. I tried to think about what we had inadvertently left out but to be honest, I came here without thinking too much about the plan.

I thought Cha Hee-Ra would definitely accept my request and join us, but it seemed that I was mistaken. Cha Hee-Ra would do that, but I was dealing with the Mercenary Queen of the Red Mercenary Guild here.

I should have known that the Mercenary Queen wouldn't agree so easily.

I didn't even think about the Mercenary Queen's feelings about our sudden visit. Right after I asked her if she was strong, we just said the things we wanted to say. She wouldn't do it to me, but she could definitely express her discomfort toward Lee Ji-Hye.

‘I feel like an idiot.’

Lee Ji-Hye had to have realized that things weren’t going well because she looked at me.

‘What’s with this atmosphere, oppa? This isn’t right.’

It felt like she was saying that to me using her eyes.

“Keep talking. Let’s see how far you'll take this,” Cha Hee-Ra said.

“If you’re talking about the reward…”

“Do I look like someone that needs a reward? What can you give me?” she

interrupted.

“Then…”

“What do you think you left out? Darling, what do *you* think you forgot?” she questioned.

“*Um…* Mercenary Queen, if there’s something you need…”

“You should've thought about what I would need. It's your job, and I'm not in the mood to explain your own job to you," she grumbled.

The cogs in Lee Ji-Hye's mind at the moment had to be spinning desperately. She looked at me with resentment, and it seemed like she was saying, “This was your plan, so why am I the one getting scolded?”

However, I looked away as if this was none of my business.

Cha Hee-Ra would probably feel better if I were to talk badly about Lee Ji-Hye later after Lee Ji-Hye was no longer in the room. I wasn’t sure if Lee Ji-Hye was thinking about cutting ties, but she was pressuring me with a desperate look.

And that was when I noticed the Red Mercenary Guild’s plaque hanging on one side of the room…

‘That’s it.’

The answer popped up in my head. It was so easy that I inadvertently missed it, which made the Mercenary Queen almost explode out of annoyance. I had to chime in and save Lee Ji-Hye.

First, I needed to send the Mercenary Queen away and bring in Cha Hee-Ra.

“Noona, cheer up. You think we would’ve missed that?” I asked. I acted like I was flattering an influential figure, and she reacted as if she were rejecting my behavior. It wasn't all that bad because she didn't actually reject me.

It meant that she wasn't *that* angry. Actually, she looked kind of satisfied. Seeing that, I figured that the Mercenary Queen had left and Cha Hee-Ra was finally here.

I acted like my usual self, but I tried my best to talk as sweetly as possible. Lee Ji-Hye looked at me as if she was about to vomit, but what could I do? It was undeniable that I had made a mistake, and things would become difficult if our Hee-Ra noona got angry.

“I was going to tell you separately, so don’t be angry, noona. The Red Mercenary will be fine. We’ll take care of the Red Mercenary Guild. A guild with no guild master doesn’t make even sense,” I said.

“…”

“It was agreed that the management committee will take the first operational authority. I didn't say it explicitly because the Red Mercenary Guild was already going to participate in the operation under the Continental Protection Management Committee’s command. It was a given, so we forgot to mention it.

"Neglecting the Red Mercenary Guild doesn't make sense. Noona, did you really think that we’d leave your guild out? You didn’t, right? Right?” I asked.

“Well, yeah,” Cha Hee-Ra answered.

I could feel her relax…

“You’re worried about the Red Mercenary Guild since you won’t be there with them, right? Of course, we had already considered that, and we already have plans about taking care of your guild,” I continued.

“*Hm,* how are you going to take care of them?” she asked.

She had become friendlier than earlier because I started talking about what she was worried about. She was gradually opening up to me, so my sweet voice had to be working against her.

It seemed a light bulb had lit up in Lee Ji-Hye's head. She had to have missed it as well, as the answer was just too obvious. If she hadn't gone shopping with Jo Hye-Jin yesterday, she would have had time to refine the finer details, which meant that this mistake wouldn't have happened in the first place.

Her expression seemed like she was telling me, "I can't believe this scum is fixing it somehow."

However, her surprise quickly turned into dissatisfaction.

“Miss Ji-Hye here will be in charge, noona. We’ll reduce exactly fifteen percent from the amount that the Red Mercenary command center is supposed to contribute to the cause,” I told her.

I noticed Cha Hee-Ra looking up and down at Lee Ji-Hye.

Lee Ji-Hye looked doubtful if my offer was even possible.

‘You can do it, right, Ji-Hye noona? Right? You can do it, right?’

CHAPTER 663
THE CHANCES OF VICTORY (5)

‘Noona, you’re great at that kind of task.’

Lee Ji-Hye looked as if she had been betrayed, but I didn’t feel guilty because she didn’t have the right to look at me with that kind of face, considering what she had done during the Rafael incident.

I truly didn't expect that the opportunity to take revenge on her would come so soon, but I smiled when I saw her panicking. Lee Ji-Hye had to have thought of something because she didn’t seem as dejected, but she looked at me as if she were calling me a narrow-minded fool.

For now, she was breathing calmly, and even though this wasn’t what she wanted, she’d probably do her best to fix it since there was no point in crying over spilled milk. The first task at hand was lowering the really high cut-off point.

"Fifteen percent is too high. Ten percent,” Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

“Fifteen percent,” Cha Hee-Ra argued.

“Ten percent is the limit, Mercenary Queen. Honestly, I can’t even guarantee ten percent, so I think ten percent is the win-win decision here. It's better to choose the realistic option rather than a mere probability,” she explained.

“Fifteen,” Cha Hee-Ra repeated.

“12 percent then,” Lee Ji-Hye suggested.

“I already told you fifteen percent. You have a good eye for talent, right, darling? If my darling believes that you can do it, you can do it. If you can’t, it means you're not trying hard enough,” she said.

“There might be unexpected variables, and guaranteeing a rate without enough data is—”

“Fifteen percent. I’ve already decided on that rate, so you take care of the rest. Got it? I’m telling you not to half-ass it. My darling didn’t vouch for you just now, but the adventurers in Lindel all know that Lee Ji-Hye of the Black Swan Guild is competent.

"I believe you can do that much, at least. What do you think? Am I thinking too highly of you?” she asked.

“…”

“If that’s the case, you can leave like a rat,” she added.

Cha Hee-Ra had definitely made up her mind, considering her choice of words. The number I called out was kind of high, but I thought Lee Ji-Hye could do it perfectly.

Lee Ji-Hye was competent, and even if she had to suffer a loss, she preferred to take the route that would lead to minimal losses. She had a lot of trust in data, and she was really meticulous as well. She also enjoyed drawing the bigger picture—actually, she was talented in drawing detailed pictures.

She just had to cut off what was unnecessary, and she might barely meet the fifteen percent cut-off line. The problem was that she would have to work like a madman, and she would always be worried about a trivial variable ruining everything.

Lee Ji-Hye frowned because she was already working hard, and Cha Hee-Ra's remarks hurt her pride.

‘Of course, that’ll make her angry.’

“If it's off by even one percent, you’ll pay the price. Do you understand what I’m saying? You understand, right?” she asked.

“…”

“Answer me,” she demanded.

“Yes, I understand,” Lee Ji-Hye answered.

“Great. Looks like we’ve signed the contract without any issues, don’t you agree? There are no other details to discuss since it feels like we’ve already discussed the important matters. This is nice, I like it. This is how it should be done,” Cha Hee-Ra

said.

'She looks happy.'

"The executives outside should come in now," Cha Hee-Ra spoke loudly, sounding satisfied.

The large-framed guys entered the room one by one.

Their bodies were so large that it was kind of unrealistic, and even though I see them often, I still found it overwhelming to see them all in one room. It was the same for the people working at the command center.

I couldn't help but start thinking about training my physique as well.

I noticed a few of the mages whom I picked out for Cha Hee-Ra, but they looked different than before. They had a promising future, but their promising future had changed. It was to the point that they looked like Physical Mage Bark Sergei's comrade.

The executives, including Choi Young-Ki, entered quietly. They stood without a single word, waiting for Cha Hee-Ra to start talking.

At last, the Mercenary Queen started talking, "From now on, you'll be temporarily under this woman's command. You know her name, right? I'm sure you've seen her face before. Introduce yourself," she ordered.

"I'm Lee Ji-Hye. I'm looking forward to working with you."

'Noona must've been really shocked.'

"You guys need to introduce yourselves as well," she said.

This was definitely abnormal, and I was sure they were confused, as our negotiations had just ended. I looked at Cha Hee-Ra again, and she looked really happy.

'It's understandable.'

Cha Hee-Ra was smart, and she knew strategy. However, there were people better than her in those departments. She wouldn't be able to go all-out, as she would be

worried about the Red Mercenary Guild.

It seemed Cha Hee-Ra was thinking that she might have to activate her attribute during the upcoming war. However, it felt like she was looking forward to it as well. It made sense, as the only thing she knew was to fight and assign a leader to do a task.

She knew very well that the guild needed someone smart like Lee Ji-Hye in the upcoming battle. Honestly, I wasn't sure if the Red Mercenary Guild and Lee Ji-Hye were compatible, but it was undeniable that Lee Ji-Hye was the smartest among them.

“I’ll introduce myself again, Acting Guild Master. I’m Choi Young-Ki.”

“I’m Park Jong-Chul. I look forward to working with you, Acting Guild Master.”

“Yang Hana. I hope we'll get along well, Acting Guild Master.”

The large-framed executives greeted with a bow.

Lee Ji-Hye seemed startled by their exaggerated greeting, even though it wasn't her first time being the subject of other people's respect. However, her expression soon turned serious, and she slowly turned to look at Cha Hee-Ra.

‘She’s pissed.’

“I understand, Mercenary Queen,” Lee Ji-Hye said.

“Oh, yeah? That’s good,” she said.

“However, I would like to make one thing clear…” she requested.

“What is it?” she asked.

“As I promised, I’ll make sure I match the fifteen percent cut-off line. It will be nothing more, nothing less than that. However, I’ll take the commanding rights of the Red Mercenary Guild in the meantime,” she replied.

“I think I already mentioned that,” she said.

“I’m taking full control. From now on, the guild members will prioritize my

commands over your commands," she explained.

"…"

"…"

"You heard her, right? Do as she says. From now on, prioritize this woman's words over mine," Cha Hee-Ra commanded.

"Can we test it out? I'm just trying to make sure, so please don't take it personally," Lee Ji-Hye requested.

"Of course," she replied.

"Mr. Young-Ki," she called out.

"…"

"Attack Cha Hee-Ra," she ordered.

'Ji-Hye noona, damn it. What's wrong with you? Have you gone mad?'

As soon as that thought popped into my head, I saw Choi Young-Ki swinging his sword toward Cha Hee-Ra. I didn't think that he'd actually listen to her, but it seemed he was certain that there was no way Cha Hee-Ra would get injured by his sword.

Still, Cha Hee-Ra was supposed to be some kind of God in their eyes, so how come they were easily able to overcome their faith and attack their God?

'What's wrong with them? Why are they filming a strange movie here? The genre's wrong. This isn't a noir film.'

Of course, Cha Hee-Ra remained nonchalant. She raised her hand and snatched the oncoming sword out of mid-air before hurling it away.

Boom!

Choi Young-Ki didn't let go of the sword and was flung away as well. He crashed into a wall and fainted. However, I knew that he had done it on purpose. He had chosen not to let go of his sword and had chosen to fall unconscious.

I was surprised by the sudden change in the atmosphere, and I wondered for a moment about how I should fix this, but I just decided to stand by and let them work this out. It was the only thing I could do in my current position.

Cha Hee-Ra didn't really seem worked up. She actually seemed to be enjoying it, and she looked like the time when she first saw me. Seeing her reaction, I figured out why Lee Ji-Hye had behaved that way.

'She probably thinks that Cha Hee-Ra is playing with her.'

I also got worked up before for a similar reason, and Lee Ji-Hye was probably frustrated at the fact that everything had gone according to Cha Hee-Ra's plan rather than her plan. Lee Ji-Hye had called me a control freak, but she was just as bad as me.

She really despised becoming a chess piece. To make things worse, Cha Hee-Ra looked like she was looking down on her, so I was sure she wanted to get back at her.

Of course, the biggest reason behind Lee Ji-Hye's actions was…

"That was fun," Cha Hee-Ra said.

Lee Ji-Hye was certain that Cha Hee-Ra wouldn't get *that* mad. Cha Hee-Ra would beat those daring enough to provoke her to death, but she always had a penchant for toying with people whom she knew wouldn't dare to cross the line.

"I'm glad you're enjoying it, Mercenary Queen," Lee Ji-Hye said.

"But it kind of put me in a bad mood. The reason I haven't laid a hand on you yet is that you're a guest," Cha Hee-Ra told her.

"Of course, and I understand that it's my fault. As I said, I just had to make sure, so please don't be angry. I apologize, but would it be okay if I leave? There's something I need to discuss with the executives… As you know, we don't have a lot of time. Enjoy your time with oppa," she said.

"…"

"I'm going," Lee Ji-Hye said to me.

"Hey," Cha Hee-Ra called out.

“Yes?”

“How much is your salary under Park Yeon-Joo?” she asked.

“I don’t like to get poached,” she told her.

“…”

“Oppa, I’m going to borrow Miss Kim Mi-Young,” she said.

“N—”

Boom!

The door closed shut.

‘No, you can’t, damn it… Don’t take Miss Kim Mi-Young away from me.’

I regretted not being able to tell her that.

This was probably her way of taking revenge on me for what I had done to her earlier. It seemed like she was trying to drag me down with her, but it also appeared that she was serious about the task she had at hand.

She probably thought that an adjutant was necessary if she wanted to take care of her original tasks as well as commanding the Red Mercenary Guild.

‘But you still can’t take Miss Kim Mi-Young… things will get really difficult for me without her.’

I had to protect Miss Kim Mi-Young no matter what.

“I really want her. I finally understand why you and Park Yeon-Joo are keeping her around. I would’ve brought her sooner if I had known that she was this competent…”

“You’re talking about Ji-Hye noona?” I asked.

“I finally understand why you trust that woman so much. I honestly thought the rumors were exaggerated, but it didn't seem to be the case. More importantly, you two are surprisingly similar…” she answered.

“We’re not that similar,” I commented.

“Well, it’s meaningless to show interest in someone who doesn't like me. Now… let’s talk about something more constructive,” she suggested.

“Is there something else you want to talk about?” I asked.

“Since I've decided to work under the Continental Protection Management Committee, we should start talking about that since we’re on the same boat now. It’s nothing serious. I’m just trying to recommend someone,” she answered.

“Who?” I asked.

“You said the Guild Master of the Blue Guild and I are the only ones capable of fighting the four named pigeons, right?” she asked.

“That’s right,” I replied.

“You still haven’t decided who’s going to fill the remaining two spots?” she questioned.

“Aside from you and Kim Hyun-Sung, I don’t have anyone to fill those spots. I can’t decide, and there isn’t anyone else suitable for that role,” I told her.

“Actually, there should be someone close to you,” she said.

“Ha-Yan is—”

“No, not her. There’s one more useful person close to you,” she interrupted me.

I had no idea what she was talking about.

I thought hard and long about it, but the only person I could think of was Rafael, who was lying in bed like a corpse. However, Cha Hee-Ra was aware of Rafael's condition, so I was sure that she wasn’t referring to him.

There was a moment of silence because I couldn’t figure out the answer to the mystery, but she soon gave me the answer. I was a bit hopeful, but I shook my head after hearing the answer.

* * *

“…”

“…”

“What’s wrong?” Ahn Ki-Mo asked.

“Hey, Ki-Mo bro. I’m suddenly hungry. Let’s get something to eat first, and we'll continue once we're done eating. I’d bear it if I can, but I just can’t bear it this time,” Park Deok-Gu answered.

CHAPTER 664
THE CHANCES OF VICTORY (6)

‘He might be more useful than you think.’

I thought about it for two days, but I was still shaking my head at Cha Hee-Ra’s opinion.

‘Of course, I don’t think Park Deok-Gu will be able to pull it off on his own, but are you not going to use the Blue Guild at all? The Blue Guild's first party is still strong without you, Kim Hyun-Sung, Jo Hye-Jin, and Jung Ha-Yan.

"I don’t know what you think about him, but I think that guy you're hanging around with isn’t that bad… The majority of people who call themselves tanks can’t even withstand a few of my punches. Even in the Red Mercenary Guild, it's hard to find someone capable of withstanding even one of my punches without falling asleep.''

She wasn’t wrong. Park Deok-Gu’s Endurance stat, which I thought had stopped growing a long time ago, could already be considered to be at the top throughout the continent.

It seemed that he had mastered the ability to withstand punches after buying time against Donovan by himself during the 27th Legion incident.

Unfortunately, Donovan wasn't really that strong, so it didn't mean that he was strong enough to go against the Four Angels. If Donovan had fought with everything he had from the start, Park Deok-Gu would have died.

Donovan had treated Park Deok-Gu as nothing more than temporary entertainment, so he didn't use his full strength against the latter. The data wouldn't lie. Our pig was only good at being someone's punching bag, so sending him to the front lines would be like signing his death warrant.

"So how are you going to use him? How do you think he's going to be useful? It's not good to just let him tank the attacks of the enemies. He's slow-witted, but tanks are basically the core of a party. He has grown strong enough to assume that role."

Indeed, Park Deok-Gu had grown. However, his stats were the only ones that had increased after the promised one year. He managed to unlock the Morale Shout skill, so I assumed he could unlock more skills.

Unfortunately, it seemed that he still needed more experience for him to be able to unlock more things. If I had to be blunt, Park Deok-Gu would become useful in five years, but we didn't have that much time on our hands.

Cha Hee-Ra was overestimating the Blue Guild's first party.

It wasn't an exaggeration to say that it was because of Kim Hyun-Sung, Jung Ha-Yan, and Jo Hye-Jin that the Blue Guild's first party was so strong. It wasn't just a matter of brute force. Of course, Jung Ha-Yan's case was kind of different, but aside from her, Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin were strong enough to carry a party.

Strength was important, of course, and every member of the first party lacked something, just like me. The only reason we had made it this far was all thanks to the synergistic effect that our own abilities had reached when combined with each other.

Sun Hee-Young could carry a party, but she was kind of like a substitute for Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin if they were not around for some reason. Sun Hee-Young just wasn't great at fighting, and Sun Hee-Young herself was aware of that.

"You're not worried because you're unable to assign missions to your subordinates, right? I think Park Deok-Gu can handle it just fine without you."

I was convinced Cha Hee-Ra had only said that, as she still hadn't seen Park Deok-Gu in action. Did she really think that she knew him better than me? I knew the pig well, and I knew that he needed Jo Hye-Jin with him to fight one of the Four Angels.

To make matters worse, the pig only knew how to become a punching bag, so he needed a competent priest to focus on healing him.

In other words, either Elena or Sun Hee-Young had to stay by his side, which would be a waste of resources because either of those two was more effective at huge skirmishes rather than just focusing their holy power on one individual.

It was even worse when I recalled that the pig couldn't really wield a sword properly. It meant that Kim Ye-Ri had to stay by his side and attack for him. Meanwhile, Ahn Ki-Mo would have to stay next to him as well as an off-tank and a backup priest.

The set-up was extremely resource-intensive, but there was no guarantee of victory. In other words, it felt more like a waste rather than a real strategy.

"You're being overprotective, darling."

"Overprotective, my ass. We're going to see who's right soon," I said.

I decided to increase the stats of both virtual Rimoura and Virtual Donovan. There would be a five-man party against them, and the members were Park Deok-Gu, Kim Ye-Ri, Ahn Ki-Mo, Elena, and Lee Chang-Ryeol.

Their utility[1] stats were at the bare minimum, while their danger response time was at the lowest. Donovan and Rimoura's bane was holy power, but those angels didn't possess that weakness, so I decided to increase Elena's base stats.

"There's more than one person participating in the war. You should think about the other variables," Cha Hee-Ra suggested.

The battle played out on the Goddess' Mirror.

Donovan immediately swung his axe, and I thought Park Deok-Gu would fail to withstand it.

'Oh, he's taking it," said Cha Hee-Ra.

"It's because of the buff, damn it," I said.

The virtual Elena buffed Park Deok-Gu.

I knew he would be able to withstand the first attack, but the problem was his Endurance. Park Deok-Gu's Stamina was also high, but once his tiny mana bar was depleted, he would soon reach his limit.

'Not bad.'

Park Deok-Gu used Morale Shout and influenced the others. The data changed and showed that our allies were pushing back the enemies. I turned to look at the Goddess' Mirror to see whether there was something wrong with it or if I had made a mistake.

‘The data is correct.’

Two hours later, the party was at a stalemate against Park Deok-Gu. In the end, the virtual Donovan managed to kill the virtual Park Deok-Gu.

“I knew it,” I said.

‘Wait, isn't it pretty good? He lasted two hours, after all.’’

“Two hours is nothing impressive.” Cha Hee-Ra pointed out.

I nodded and thought that the reason Park Deok-Gu managed to somehow last that long was that he was fighting the basic model of virtual Donovan. If he were up against a tougher opponent, he wouldn't have lasted even ten minutes.

Unfortunately, we had zero clue about the abilities and attributes those pigeons possessed, and I also didn't dare to use the data that I had gathered from Kim Hyun-Sung about those angels during his past life.

The angels that he had fought alongside the holy warrior of his past life were extremely powerful, and there was no way Park Deok-Gu could handle them.

I typed in Park Deok-Gu's stats and signature ability while tapping my thigh with one hand, and I soon realized that he wouldn't last even an hour against the non-basic model of Donovan. Park Deok-Gu's low utility stats and danger response time were holding back the entire party.

‘What if I change it?’

I got curious, so I increased his utility stats and danger response time to the maximum and ran the simulation once more. I honestly thought that there wouldn't be that much of a difference, but I noticed that the air about the party members had changed.

Thinking that the fight would last long, I tapped on the fast-forward button, but nothing really changed. They were still fighting after eight, nine, and thirteen simulation hours.

‘Shit. How did he win… ’

I couldn't quite comprehend what had happened during the bloody battle that led to this strange outcome. Park Deok-Gu somehow killed Donovan. Obviously, I compiled the data afterward, but the system reported a twenty-three percent chance of success rather than less than three percent, which was what I had been expecting.

'Wait, it's actually reasonable.

I had raised two of his lowest stats to the maximum so he could be considered Tactical Park Deok-Gu. Unfortunately, I didn't have the luxury to take care of Park Deok-Gu's party in the upcoming war, as I had to supervise the bigger picture.

'I should make them train.'

I had to make sure that they would become proficient enough at using their attributes once the remaining thirty-three days were over.

If they managed to make up for what they were lacking, they might be able to hold out until Kim Hyun-Sung was available to help them.

The current Kim Hyun-Sung was stronger than the Kim Hyun-Sung in our past lives, so it might not take him that long to defeat an angel.

'I really don't know... '

It was a difficult decision. I wasn't sure whether it was because I was reminded of the Park Deok-Gu in our past lives, but the only path I could come up with for him was being a punching bag.

It was so bad that I wondered if I was denying reality and was brainwashing myself.

I stood up and started walking, and I soon reached the docks where the large boat was located.

"You said you would be here a few hours ago; how come you're so late?" Park Deok-Gu complained.

"I was kind of busy. Isn't it actually better that I came late? Did you complete the task I gave you?" I asked.

"..."

'This pig… '

I didn't want to believe it, but it had to be true. It seemed that he had failed to complete his task in time. He was speaking confidently, but he seemed relieved that he had started working on it before I arrived.

"That's not it. You must be thinking that I'm still the same Park Deok-Gu who had cleaned up your mess when we were inside the tutorial dungeon. You trained me, hyung-nim. I've been making steady progress in secret," Park Deok-Gu replied.

"Are you confident? Can I check?" I questioned.

"Wait here. I actually checked a few times because you were late. By the way, how are things between you and noonim?" he asked.

"Stop changing the subject and lead the way, Deok-Gu," I told him.

"I'm not. I'm genuinely worried. It's so hard to see you these days because you're so busy, and it's the same for Hyun-Sung bro… I haven't seen noonim at all… Sora is with noonim, and Hye-Jin noonim has been working separately recently as well.

"I know we don't have a lot of time left, but we should group up at times like this. It'd be nice if we could spend time together before the war happens… I honestly don't like saying this, but if someone gets seriously injured…"

"That won't happen because no one is going to die. You don't have to worry about that. You just need to do your job properly. Look, pig. I think you missed something." I pointed out.

"*Huh?*"

Park Deok-Gu looked at me in disbelief. He cut a disgraceful figure as he moved in a hurry and rummaged through the luggage. He had failed to carry out the task I had given him, which was to store supplies in Noah's Ark.

Witnessing his blunder, I was convinced that this pig was going to be useless.

"*Ah*, well, you see… I must've made a mistake. I think I forgot a page… So this…" Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

“Where’s Ahn Ki-Mo?” I asked.

“He said he had other things to handle…” he replied.

“Did you tell him that you’re going to try and take care of this by yourself again?” I questioned.

“I didn’t. Ki-Mo bro said that he had something else…” he mumbled.

“I really can’t trust you to do anything,” I commented.

“That’s… not what happened. I really forgot…” he muttered.

“I’m sure I told you that this task was important,” I told him.

“…”

“You don’t know why I assigned you this task, right? You do remember what I told you, right?” I asked.

“Of course, I remember. I definitely do! I haven't forgotten it. You’re planning on carrying out a landing operation with this ship. When the front line is pushed back, we’re going to head straight into the heart of the enemies!” he answered.

“So what do you think is going to happen if a crucial item ends up missing by then?” I asked.

“…”

“Shit, forget it. Don’t do it, Deok-Gu. You can go and do something else. You do know why I assigned this task to you when I could’ve asked one of the guild staff to do it, right? Forget about a blitz commander or being a party leader. It’s probably best if you just protect the rearguards,” I suggested.

“No, that’s not… I-I’m sorry…” he stuttered.

“Forget it. Just go somewhere…”

“…”

"…"

'Ugh, look at this pig's face… '

"Shit, this is your last chance. Tell me your mission," I ordered.

"Participate in the main base defense battle," Park Deok-Gu replied.

"And?" I questioned.

"Protect the Nice Boat," he answered.

"Keep going," I told him.

"The landing operation," he said.

"That's right," I said.

'Yeah, entrusting him with a task was a bit too much for him. Definitely too much.'

No matter how much I thought about it, staying in the backlines and asking him to protect Noah's Ark was the best job for Park Deok-Gu.

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1. stats related to movement, go figure xD ☜

CHAPTER 665
OVERCOMING THE WALL (1)

'This is the most important task.'

I wasn't planning on letting Park Deok-Gu slack off, and it wasn't the reason I had assigned him this task. It would be easier to explain it if I were to say that it was insurance just in case I had to cut ties with the continent.

It would be extremely difficult for us to survive if the boat ended up getting destroyed during the intense battle, so it was best to be prepared for that possibility. Of course, I couldn't tell him the truth. It would be too awkward to tell him that we might run away, and there was no way he would just nod at that kind of explanation.

The best reason I could think of at the moment was to say that the boat was going to be a part of a landing.

'Right.'

Once we had no choice but to activate the Noah's Ark, I was sure that this pig would run to the front lines by himself. There was a high chance that he would do something stupid like trying to save as many people as possible.

In a nutshell, he was really unpredictable, and there was nothing more frustrating than dealing with people whose movements couldn't be predicted at all.

'That's why this is a safer approach.'

This way, he would immediately turn around and protect the Nice Boat until he was given a different order. He would carry out his mission at all costs, so it was no exaggeration to say that it was the perfect job for him.

I nodded and looked up at him, but he looked kind of discouraged.

Park Deok-Gu was doing his best, but my scolding had to have hurt him.

“Stop acting so pitiful, Deok-Gu,” I said.

“I’m not acting. I’m just feeling a bit down,” Park Deok-Gu replied.

“…”

“…”

“Don’t be discouraged,” I told him.

“I’m not exactly discouraged…” he mumbled.

“I'm a bit sensitive these days because we don’t have a lot of time left. That’s why I scolded you, so don’t worry about it. I’m not mad because I don’t trust you. I just want you to be a bit more cautious. I just said it so you'll be more cautious from now on, so lighten up,” I explained.

“But still…”

“Don’t hold a grudge; it is what it is. Engrave into your head what your job is once something happens instead of relying on me. That’s more important than anything else,” I told him.

“I know what you’re talking about, hyung-nim,” he commented.

“I always believe in you, Deok-Gu,” I said.

“Really?” he asked.

‘Yeah, I believe you half the time.’

“I’ve been telling you to keep that in mind. I tell you every time. If I can do it, you can do it better,” I reminded him.

“Right.”

“Yeah, that. Don’t be nervous, and take your time with the preparations. There’s a reason I gave this task to you,” I said.

“I-It's a bit surprising,” he commented.

The atmosphere was improving, and I couldn’t help but smile because he was so innocent and cute to the point that I found it absurd.

Honestly, I wasn’t sure if this was something to be *that* happy about, but he seemed really satisfied with his task.

“Isn’t this the first time you’ve given me my own task?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“I don’t think so,” I replied.

“It is. This is definitely the first time. Of course, you’ve ordered me around, but they had never been this important,” he said.

‘That’s true.’

“You just gave me errands, and I’m not sure if this is the right way to describe it, but the majority of the tasks weren’t dangerous at all. Of course, I ended up causing a lot of trouble, and I know that I’m not good enough for you, so I wasn’t that sad.

"I mean, it's not like I want to do this kind of task every day," he explained.

‘Stop being serious all of a sudden, and don’t talk about your feelings… ’

“Oh, yeah?” I asked.

“Now…”

“…”

“Now I feel like you've acknowledged me,” he continued.

‘Don't say that, you pig.’

I couldn't help but think that perhaps this pig knew everything.

I started feeling guilty when I saw the pig’s proud face.

“That’s how I felt because you’ve never given me a task like this. To be honest, I felt ashamed and kind of angry because it seemed like you didn't trust me. I kind of felt that long ago. You finally assigned a task to me, but I ended up making mistakes. I

was angry at myself, not at you. This is the first important task you've given me personally, but I felt like I already messed up before it even started," he said.

'No, you're doing fine.'

"I thought it wasn't going to be all that different this time as well. I thought it was going to be another defense mission," he said.

'You'll do some defending this time as well… '

"You have no idea how happy I was when I saw the manual you sent me," he told me.

'Shit… '

"I unknowingly started crying!" he yelled.

"Stop exaggerating," I said.

"I'm telling the truth. I swear with everything I have. Mr. Ki-Mo was there with me, so ask him if you don't believe me. It was unsightly, but I cried tears of happiness. I thought about how deep your trust must be in me that you'd assign such an important task to me," he continued.

"Yeah…"

"I'll complete this task even if I have to die," he said.

"You don't have to feel like you have to be *that* responsible. This plan will be carried out once things go wrong. Until then, we'll continue with the current plan. Honestly, I hope that you won't have to head to the front line while riding this. If we get to that situation, it means that things have really gone downhill," I explained.

"I understand," he said.

"The only time you'll step up is when I give you the signal because that means we need you strategically. That's something you shouldn't forget. Not using this thing is the best situation," I told him.

"I've engraved it into my heart, so don't worry so much," he reassured me.

“That’s a relief… Anyway, have you eaten yet?” I asked.

“Not yet,” he replied.

“Let’s go eat together. It’s been a while,” I suggested.

“Really?” he asked.

“I still have some time left. Ye-Ri and Ahn Ki-Mo are here, right? Let’s all eat together,” I said.

‘There isn’t a landing operation, Deok-Gu. I don’t think you’ll have to actively participate on the battlefield… ’

I had no choice but to change the subject.

Park Deok-Gu looked proud at the thought that I had finally acknowledged him, so I felt embarrassed about continuing this conversation. Even at this moment, he looked like the proud leader of the landing operation. His gaze looked more serious than usual, and he was walking in a more dignified manner, which made me feel guilty.

Honestly, I understood Park Deok-Gu's feelings. How could I not? I hadn't really given Park Deok-Gu any other missions after the Blue Guild had stabilized, and I had never appointed him as the main person in charge of tasks like this. His role so far had been a democracy fighter or a meat shield.

Honestly, I was nervous about entrusting him with any tasks at all.

I wasn’t worried about his safety. Actually, I was worried, but I obviously entrusted missions to people with a higher success rate. There were people who could perform better as the core of the party compared to Park Deok-Gu.

However, there was no reason to split up the party members, so I had to select from the party members this time.

‘Should I really entrust this to him?’

“I honestly didn’t think we’d be using the ship like this,” Park Deok-Gu said.

“I agree,” I said.

'It wasn't that bad. If we just polish it a little more and use it… for about two hours… '

"I'm glad that you found it helpful," he commented.

'How are we going to stop the other two angels? One side of the front line will be completely swept away. If we stop them using Park Deok-Gu… '

"*Oh*, there's Ye-Ri and Ki-Mo bro," he said.

"It's been a while, Sub Guild Master. It's really nice to see you like this," Ahn Ki-Mo greeted.

"Hey," Kim Ye-Ri greeted.

"It's been a while. You as well, Mr. Ki-Mo," I greeted back.

'No, we don't have enough time.'

If we had a little more time, I would have made Park Deok-Gu train.

"…"

"…"

"Look at this! If we do this, we can get at least three times stronger. Ki-Mo bro will step on my shoulders, and Ye-Ri will ride your shoulders. It'll be a triple combination. We'll catch our opponent off-guard," Park Deok-Gu suggested.

"It looks stupid," Kim Ye-Ri commented.

'Don't smile as if you're having fun, Ye-Ri. They're acting like this even more because you keep playing along. It's nice that they still haven't lost their innocence, but they should maintain their dignity.'

"No one will argue that it can at least instill a sense of intimidation to monsters. You can immediately unleash your holy power above and below you, and if something happens, Ye-Ri can just jump off," Park Deok-Gu explained.

"Not bad," I commented.

“I knew you would say that,” he said.

“Don’t use it in an actual fight, though. Sit down and eat,” I told him.

“On top of this, if you hang on my back, it’ll be perfect,” he added.

‘No, I don’t think it’s perfect at all.’

I wasn’t sure how our conversation ended up here, but I couldn't quite grasp what they were doing. Ahn Ki-Mo seemed like he was playing along, but Kim Ye-Ri looked like she was actually enjoying this. I knew she was at that age when she would enjoy things like this, but it seemed that Park Deok-Gu and Ahn Ki-Mo had influenced her as well. The way she somersaulted and focused on her landing resembled Yetni Koba, who had mastered the Dance of Enchantment.

It became clear that I really couldn’t entrust one side of the front line to Park Deok-Gu. If I could focus *only* on Park Deok-Gu for the next thirty-three days, it might be possible, but I was still trying to resolve Cha Hee-Ra and Jung Ha-Yan's cases.

I left the Park-Ki-Ri siblings and sent out text messages.

[Noona, noona, noona.]

[What? Stop sending me useless messages. I’m busy because of a certain someone.]

[Can I borrow Ha Yeon-Soo?]

[No. It hasn’t been that long since she reached tier one. It’ll be too much for her to work with you. Don’t make her clean up corpses; just blow away half the continent like I suggested. *Ah*, if the Cha Hee-Ra plan works out, you can just blow up one-third of it. So what happened? Didn’t you say you were going to make Cha Hee-Ra and Jung Ha-Yan do field training? I'm busy, but I'll be there to see it.]

[It’s in progress.]

[Do it as soon as possible. They need time to recover, too. The Mercenary Queen said that she wanted to do it first, right?]

[Something like that. I need to prepare a safety device first because it’ll be problematic if they get seriously injured.]

[She must be aware of the fact that she's still lacking. Anyway, what are you going to do about Park Deok-Gu?]

[I don't think there's any potential here.]

[It can't be helped if that's what you think, but I don't think it's going to be that bad.]

And that was when I heard a voice behind me…

"Who are you talking to so intently during our meal?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

CHAPTER 666
OVERCOMING THE WALL (2)

“It’s none of your business,” I answered.

“Is it something important?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

‘It's pretty important.’

“Hee-Ra noona sent me a request because there were some things we needed to talk about related to the training,” I replied.

“I see. So is Hyun-Sung bro busy because of the training as well?” he asked.

“Yeah, he’s really busy. He doesn’t really meet people, and I don’t really know what he’s been up to… He doesn’t answer when I call him.”

Kim Ye-Ri was the one who answered him. She answered immediately as if this was her chance and was probably trying to show off that she knew Kim Hyun-Sung better than anyone here.

‘Oh yeah? He answers my calls, but he doesn't answer yours.’

“I see…” Park Deok-Gu said as he pondered seriously.

He was quick-witted in the strangest situations, so I was worried that he would catch on to the fact that the landing operation was a bunch of bullshit. However, I realized that I was worried for nothing when I heard him talking.

“Hey, hyung-nim,” Park Deok-Gu called out.

“Yeah?”

“Is it really okay for me not to do any training?” he asked.

“You’re already doing a separate training,” I answered.

“No, I’m talking about special training. I noticed that the strong people of the continent all have a role to play, and it seems like they’ve been preparing for their roles… Shouldn’t I also… do special training under your supervision…” he asked.

“Well…” I paused.

“Cha Hee-Ra, Ha-Yan noonim, Hyun-Sung bro… and even Hye-Jin noonim seem to be doing some kind of training to break the wall they’ve encountered. I don’t know what kind of mission they’ve all been assigned, but the mission you’ve given me isn’t an ordinary task. It’s important compared to other people, but don’t you think I’m lacking?” he questioned.

“…”

“I think I need to be stronger than I am now…” he continued.

‘Wipe your mouth before you talk.’

“You don’t need to think that way. You’re more than enough right now, Deok-Gu. Overcoming a wall isn’t something that can be done in a short period of time. Only a small number of people can become stronger that way.

"I think you’re doing fine, so don’t get influenced by the people around you and just work hard on the task I’ve given you. Even if others start running, don’t think about running with them,” I warned him.

“You’re not wrong, but… I think I can become stronger under your care,” he said.

Park Deok-Gu had potential, but the effectiveness of the training was low.

Even if it were possible, his stats wouldn't increase that much.

I felt kind of bad for Park Deok-Gu, but he had already exhausted his potential. His stats had already reached the max. I managed to help him grow this much through various methods, but he was just an ordinary person. If he could overcome a wall with a bit of management, I wouldn’t have been thinking so much in the first place.

‘We only have thirty-three days left.’

If I had to use my time, it would be better to use it on Cha Hee-Ra and Jung Ha-Yan

because helping them overcome the wall before them would make them grow exponentially.

“You’re strong enough right now,” I told him.

“Sub Guild Master is right. During your spar with Miss Ye-Ri recently…”

“Bullshit. I’m stronger. Mr. Deok-Gu’s attacks can't even touch me,” Kim Ye-Ri interrupted.

“Even if that’s the case, he doesn’t show an opening that easily and even when you go in, it’s difficult to break through his high Endurance. He grew a lot over this year,” Ahn Ki-Mo explained.

“It’s because I learned a lot from you,” he said.

“I learned a lot from you as well, Mr. Deok-Gu,” Ahn Ki-Mo said.

‘Now that I think about it, Ahn Ki-Mo was originally a member of the Red Mercenary Guild.’

I thought their journey had helped Park Deok-Gu grow.

“I know we don’t have a lot of time, but I want to try as hard as I can. If there’s anything you need, tell me right away. Or should I practice the landing operation instead?” he questioned.

It seemed that he wouldn't back down. He really looked like he wanted to do something in the meantime, so I had no choice but to start rummaging in my Infinity Bag. Rather than focusing on physical growth, I thought these would be helpful to him.

“I meant it when I said you’re doing fine. I think these books will serve you better than just physical training,” I suggested.

“*Ah*, I’ve read those books as well,” Ahn Ki-Mo commented.

[The Basics of Party Play]

[Battle Theory - Beginner]

[Battle Theory - Intermediate]

[Understanding Basic Tactics]

‘He'll benefit immensely if his comprehension goes up.’

Park Deok-Gu's comprehension was the lowest among us, so I wasn't sure if these books would truly help him in the short term. However, I was sure that one day, the knowledge that he would learn from these books would come in handy.

Eliminating even a few useless movements and hastening his thought process meant that Park Deok-Gu would slightly become stronger. His comprehension would increase, and he would be able to make tactical decisions.

The only problem was that I wasn't sure if he would accept my offer. He would probably flip over a few pages before throwing the books aside. No matter how much I thought about it, I just couldn’t imagine Park Deok-Gu sitting at a desk and reading a book.

I thought he might even feel uncomfortable about my offer.

I glanced at him, but…

‘Uh, he actually likes it.’

When Ahn Ki-Mo reached out for the books, Park Deok-Gu hurriedly snatched them.

“Yeah, you should definitely study,” I told him.

“…”

“I was actually thinking that I needed this. If something happens, everyone will become too busy to help me. Yeah,” Park Deok-Gu said.

‘He likes it so much that I’m starting to feel bad again.’

I never imagined that he would react like that when I suggested it without thinking much about it. I was starting to feel really guilty because he looked as if the continent's fate depended on him.

“Of course, don’t miss out on the basic training. You have to work hard with it as well. You have to finish reading all four books within a month, as it took me a month to finish reading them,” I told him.

“*Ah*, so you're done with them? Did you highlight stuff in the book?” he asked.

“I think I did. You can check that by yourself… I’m going to get going,” I said.

“Why? You should stay longer,” he suggested.

“I need to do some work,” I said.

“…”

“What?” I asked.

“Hey, can I really see you in thirty days? I know we don’t have time, but I think it’ll be best if we all gather—”

“I’ll set something up when I get the chance,” I interrupted him.

“It’s not just about setting something up. We have to meet up no matter what. I’ll take care of it, so just make some time. We’ve been apart for so long that I’m starting to forget the faces of some people.

"The entire guild is also changing due to maintenance issues… I think it’s a miracle that after falling into this strange place, we went through many things together and made many connections, so we should at least see each other.

"We're about to face the continent's biggest threat, after all," he explained.

“Alright, *I’ll* set something up,” I told him.

“Really? I’m not lying. I really want to see everyone again,” he emphasized.

“You’re right. We need to see each other,” I said.

I could see everything with the Telescope, but it was different from actually meeting them. I thought it would be fun if the guild members gathered and socialized before the upcoming bi-battle. I would have some time once I was done dealing with the

work that had been piling up on my desk, and Park Deok-Gu's idea wasn't really bad.

I understood Park Deok-Gu's longing. He wanted us to gather and socialize like before when we talked about silly things, laughed, and drank with each other. This pig liked people, so I was convinced that he was the most affectionate member of the Blue Guild.

And that was why I hadn't been appointing him to any role…

I was sure he'd blame himself if someone were to get hurt. If someone were to die, he'd definitely have a mental breakdown.

His mental breakdown would ruin him.

Would he be able to ignore the death of—not just the guild members—but other people as well?

The issue was I wasn't sure if Park Deok-Gu could ignore someone being held at gunpoint by one of the angels.

No, it wasn't like I wasn't sure. I guarantee that Park Deok-Gu wouldn't be able to ignore a person in need. I could already imagine him running out to save them and messing up the entire battle.

'This is more problematic than stats or luck.'

People in charge had to be calm and composed all the time.

Park Deok-Gu was far from the epitome of calmness, making him unfit for such a role.

I patted his back with a smile and started walking away.

I looked back and saw Park Deok-Gu looking like a child seeing his dad off to work. I could feel that he didn't want to part ways, but I couldn't invest more of my time here.

Lee Ji-Hye was right—Cha Hee-Ra and Jung Ha-Yan's issues were urgent.

In the end, I had no choice but to use the remaining time to focus on those two.

The two of them hadn't been able to overcome the wall before them, so I had to take action. Of course, I could see through Mind's Eye that they were growing little by little, but we were running out of time, and their stats were far from satisfactory.

Since we had no time, I had to focus on them and make sure that they would grow.

The suggestion had come from Cha Hee-Ra. As expected, my hand mirror vibrated.

[Darling, can't you do it as soon as possible?]

[Why? Do you need to train now?]

[I'm not sure. I'll need to try first… I think I'd be less angry if I just dueled someone. I'm in a forest nearby, but I already told you that… I don't like it. I think it's best if I duel someone who's on the same level as me. Anyway, how are things going for you? Did you decide to exclude him in the end?]

[Well… for now. I haven't completely excluded him though. I'll keep an eye on him, and if the time comes where I have to use him, I'll throw him in.]

[You're speaking empty words again. So, how long is it going to take?]

[I don't think it'll take long. I still need time to prepare.]

[Can't you do it faster? My body feels kind of stiff… The longer I stay still, the more frustrated I become because it feels like I may have to run rampant a bit longer than usual. Lately, I've been putting it under control, but… I'm still annoyed. By the way, why is it Jung Ha-Yan and not Kim Hyun-Sung?]

[Hyun-Sung has other things he needs to handle. More importantly, Ha-Yan is experiencing some issues…]

[Looks like she's having a hard time growing.]

[Yeah.]

[We don't have a lot of time left. Don't you think it's problematic?]

[Well, it's not *that* big of a problem. Honestly, she's been growing steadily, and I'm also doubtful if this is even necessary, but… it's better to be safe than sorry. Her stats

alone are enough for her to be at the summit. She might even be stronger than you, noona.]

[You really think so?]

[No, you have to win.]

[I'm not sure if that will be enough. I don't think your second girlfriend will get angry just because she was defeated. Of course, I'm sure she'll be shocked, but… it won't be the first time, after all…]

[No, she won't lose to you.]

[What are you talking about?]

[Ha-Yan will lose to a mage named Park Mijin. You heard a rumor that Ha-Yan was defeated by Park Mijin, a rookie mage, during a mock battle training. I'm sure Ha-Yan wants to train more than you.]

[…]

It was a message that made me feel like she somewhat understood what was going on.

[Sounds like fun.]

'No, noona… I don't think it's going to be fun.'

And it was all because I had to do the opposite of what I had been desperately doing until now—I had to make those monsters fight.

CHAPTER 667
OVERCOMING THE WALL (3)

After my conversation with Cha Hee-Ra, I decided to throw the bait. It was honestly a gamble, but Jung Ha-Yan had to be involved as she had also hit a wall that she couldn't quite overcome, just like Cha Hee-Ra.

It wasn't that difficult to overcome the wall, and the solution was simple. Thus, the mock battle was decided. It would have been great if I could consider each and every single variable that could alter the outcome, but I didn't have the luxury of time to do that.

It was exactly because I had no time that I couldn't think about Park Deok-Gu's issue.

'It's unfortunate.'

I wouldn't have done this if I had time, but we were in a pinch, so I had no choice but to send Han Sora another quest and ask her to save the continent once more. Cha Hee-Ra was important, but Jung Ha-Yan was more impactful to the overall situation.

I got even more convinced of that when I recalled Kim Hyun-Sung's stories about Jung Ha-Yan's exploits. In other words, I had no choice but to focus on Jung Ha-Yan, as Jung Ha-Yan's growth would drastically increase our chances of victory.

Honestly, I wouldn't even attempt this without Han Sora, and it was all thanks to Han Sora that we managed to get this far. Han Sora told Jung Ha-Yan that the mysterious mage Park Mijin had somehow defeated Cha Hee-Ra.

Park Mijin's victory was so overwhelming that Cha Hee-Ra failed to even put up a fight.

I could see through the Telescope that Han Sora was scared, but she had dreams she wanted to achieve, so she acted a bit more aggressively than I initially thought. I knew that she would always be afraid of Jung Ha-Yan, but she seemed less afraid of her.

It made sense, as the first time would always be difficult and scary. However, things would get easier for just about anyone once they had gotten used to it. Han Sora looked like she was in a hurry to achieve her dreams as she spoke courageously.

'She's really brave... '

Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora were talking to each other. I told her to leak some information during their mealtime today, so they were probably talking about that.

Based on the situation, it seems like some time had passed since she had carefully brought up the topic, and Jung Ha-Yan still looked the same as when I checked up on her earlier through the Telescope.

It seemed like it had been a few days since she washed her hair. Clearly, it had also been quite a while since she left her room. She looked sickly, which made me think that she hadn't been eating properly.

I couldn't help but think that making Jung Ha-Yan leave the room and take care of herself was like an Epic-rank quest in Han Sora's eyes. Anyway, Jung Ha-Yan looked like she was actually studying. Her bedraggled look bothered me, but the guilt vanished when I told myself that this was necessary.

This was the only way she could get close to her past life's prowess over the next thirty or so days.

Jung Ha-Yan's voice was trembling, and she sounded angry.

'I should've watched them earlier... '

- H-H-How… How did Park Mijin win? That's…

- I don't… know the details… either. The mock battle was held in secret. I just heard it from Miss Kim Mi-Young. That's all I know. I don't know how the battle happened, but based on what I heard, that woman dominated the battle the moment it began.

- Park Mijin.

- She seems more talented than I thought. It was just a mock battle, but there's no way that red-headed woman would have gotten defeated so easily… I think she has a trump card up her sleeve. A mage will inevitably have a hard time suppressing a

vanguard, regardless of their strength. I think she probably didn't even have time to channel her spells. Maybe a one-on-one battle is her specialty since mages like that do exist. You can do what she did as well… I'm sure of it.

- B-B-But still…

- It's not a big deal. People call her a genius, but she's not as talented as you. I'm sure it was a bit exaggerated… and it's normal for people to exaggerate things. Don't worry too much.

- So that's why I-I-I'm also doing a mock battle with C-C-Cha Hee-Ra as well, right? W-When am I doing it? When…

- I'm not sure, but probably soon. They said they'll let us know, so we just need to prepare starting now.

- I-I-I can beat her as well, right?

- Of course. You can definitely achieve what Park… Mijin had achieved. I'm sure you'll defeat her. It's an important mock battle, so you'll have to be prepared. I'll help you with whatever I can.

'She mastered it.'

I couldn't help but feel impressed at how Han Sora had mastered the art of living on the edge. It was impressive how she took control of the conversation. At this point, I wasn't sure if transferring her out would be the right choice.

Even if I were to transfer her out, she would just probably be transferred from Jung Ha-Yan's Anger Management Team to Archmage's Anger Management Committee.

Of course, I was sure that she would be happy with the salary offer. Honestly, if I took care of her transfer, and she ended up getting transferred to a different region…

'I don't think Ha-Yan will just stand by and watch.'

Distances didn't really matter to Jung Ha-Yan, and since Han Sora had basically become her best friend, I was sure she would kick up a fuss if I were to do such a thing.

'It's a shame… I really want Sora to be happy at least once, but… now I just feel bad for her.'

- Be… prepared… Yeah, I'll be prepared for it.

- This mock battle is really important, even though the public doesn't know it yet. The reason they pushed for the mock battle with you right after Cha Hee-Ra and Park Mijin's mock battle is because of…

- W-W-Why

- Well…

- W-What is it?

- I-I'll tell you. I'll tell you right now. Well… there's sort of a special mission… Yes, *hiccup*, they're trying to assign you a special mission… It's an important job where you'll need to work with the sub guild master… *Hiccup*.

- R-Really?

- I'm not certain. I'm not sure, but… I think that's what everyone is thinking. It's a mission where a mage has to fight against a powerful vanguard. They're trying to select someone that suits the role… Of course, the sub guild master definitely loves you, but… this is part of his work, so he also has to consider other strong mages. *Hiccup*.

Han Sora was hiccuping, and it seemed she was unaware that she was *that* nervous.

Honestly, her courage and bravery had truly astounded me. She was facing her fear and anxiety for the sake of getting transferred out. She was desperate, and she had the determination of a warrior facing a demon.

- D-D-Do you think I can win? Cha Hee-Ra… I really don't like her… I really don't like her, but… she's strong.

- I'm sure you can win without any issues. Park Mijin pulled it off as well. She probably has… some kind of weakness.

- I really don't like Cha Hee-Ra, but… I-I-I hate Park Mijin more than Cha Hee-Ra. I

really hate Park Mijin.

- I don't like… Park Mijin, either. I didn't like the rumors about… her getting c-close to the sub guild master because it sounds like she has an ulterior motive…

- R-R-Right?

- Yes, and it's really funny how she suddenly appeared one day… Maybe she's one of the demon contractors who appeared last time. I think it's best if you act a little more cautiously… since the sub guild master trusts people a little too easily.

- I-I hope that's the case… If she really is a bad person…

-…

- I can kill her.

- You can't kill her. Don't…

- You'll be with me when that time comes, right?

-…

- Right?

- Let's… focus on the mock battle with Cha Hee-Ra first.

- You'll be there, right?

- Let's focus on the battle first…

- B-B-Be there with me.

- Of course…

For some reason, I couldn't help but walk on eggshells as their plan to emerge victorious suddenly turned into a plan to murder Park Mijin. The way Jung Ha-Yan pulled her hair with her hands made me think she was more stressed out than I thought.

‘She must not be confident… ’

I was kind of surprised, but it made sense. She probably thought that she would have an extremely difficult time defeating Cha Hee-Ra—no, she probably thought that it was impossible.

She looked more serious and anxious than ever. I wasn't sure if it was because Cha Hee-Ra had already defeated her once, but she acknowledged that Cha Hee-Ra wouldn't be an easy opponent.

Jung Ha-Yan was afraid of Cha Hee-Ra, and she acted like a savage beast that had just encountered a beast that was more violent than them. She had unknowingly started respecting her territory, and she had been turning a blind eye to Cha Hee-Ra's antics.

Of course, Cha Hee-Ra's importance to me and her status on the continent were probably one of the variables that led to Jung Ha-Yan making that kind of decision, but I was sure that it was mostly because Cha Hee-Ra was strong.

Jung Ha-Yan was nervous exactly because Cha Hee-Ra was powerful.

Jung Ha-Yan looked like she had many questions in mind.

‘How did Park Mjin defeat her? What did she have up her sleeve? Who the hell is Park Mijin… How did she pull it off? Can I defeat her? Can I do it? I lost last time… I think I might lose this time as well.’

Han Sora embraced herself rightly. She got scared seeing Jung Ha-Yan scratching her head until her head started bleeding.

- I’m sure you can do it.

‘That’s right, Ha-Yan. You have the advantage based on your stats.’

- Calm down, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I’m sure you’ll succeed.

- W-What if I can’t…

- There’s no way that'll happen. Even if you fail, there are other ways… the sub guild master won’t just abandon you as well.

‘That’s true.’

- *Kgh, kgh, kgh…*

- Don’t get overwhelmed.

‘No, she needs to feel burdened. I feel really bad, but… she needs to feel burdened right now. People often mature upon experiencing hardship, and she won’t experience this kind of trial again.’

- *Kegh, kggh, heuk…*

‘I feel bad because she’s crying so much. I’m not sure if I should make her cry more… ’

- You two will start living together soon. You just need to work a bit harder, so hang in there…

- *Ugh*, y-y-you’ll live… next to us, right, Sora?

‘That request is a little too cruel for Sora, Ha-Yan.

-…

- You’ll live next to us, right?

-…

- I know you will.

- Yeah…

I saw Han Sora’s face grow pale with my own eyes. She looked as if something was wrong. Her gaze was telling me that this wasn’t right, and she stared blankly at the ceiling. Her thoughts were inscrutable, even to me.

- I-I-I’ll do my best, Sora. Cha Hee-Ra… I can defeat Cha Hee-Ra. I-I can kill Park Mijjin as well.

- I know you can.

- I-I-I won’t let her take it… no matter what.

-…

- She can’t have it… no matter what. I won’t let her have it. Never… N-Never ever…

Han Sora started trembling. If I were in her shoes, I would have been trembling as well.

It really had been a while since I saw Jung Ha-Yan acting like her old self.

For some reason, I felt anxious about it.

[Noona, make sure you’re prepared. Don’t fight her like you did in the past. You have to think like you're fighting Kim Hyun-Sung while fighting her.]

I had no choice but to send that message to Cha Hee-Ra.

* * *

“I’m always prepared, darling,” Cha Hee-Ra replied.

CHAPTER 668
OVERCOMING THE WALL (4)

“You’re here, Ha-Yan. It’s really been a while,” I greeted.

“O-O-Oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“Have you been doing well?” I asked.

“Y-Yes… I-I’ve been doing well. It was kind of tough, but… I’ve been doing fine. Have you been doing well, too?” she asked.

“Yeah. I’m sorry I haven’t been contacting you more often. I’ve been pretty busy… I’m sorry, Ha-Yan,” I apologized.

“I-It’s fine. It’s nothing you need to apologize for, oppa. Yes…” she said.

“It’s been a while, Miss Sora,” I greeted.

“Yes, it's been a while, Sub Guild Master…” Han Sora said.

“Are things going smoothly with your task?” I asked.

“Yes, it’s not that bad. I honestly don’t know if I’ll be able to meet the required quantity in time, but… it’s fine for now, so you don’t have to worry,” she replied.

“Sora has been w-w-working hard,” Jung Ha-Yan commented.

“Oh yeah?”

‘I can’t make eye contact with her.’

I couldn’t make eye contact with Jung Ha-Yan, not because I felt bad, but because her gaze looked lifeless, which scared me.

‘It won’t be like this forever.’

After that day, I continued watching her with my telescope, but she still had the same gaze. However, since she had to visit me, she did clean herself up, but she still didn't look normal. The biggest issue I had was her eyes.

'Man, I hope I'm not making a mistake. What if this turns into a bigger problem?'

Jung Ha-Yan looked discouraged. I wasn't sure exactly what she was thinking, but one of the reasons she looked like that was because she didn't feel confident.

I was sure she was prepared, but she seemed like she hadn't completely forgotten about Park Mijin, the genius mage. I worked hard to turn her back to her normal self, but it felt like she was going back to the time when we had just met.

It wasn't a proper example, but I could understand Kim Hyun-Sung's despair.

Imagine having to turn Jung Ha-Yan back to the way she was once this was all over. I wouldn't even know where to start. I had to reassure Jung Ha-Yan and lift her low self-esteem. Of course, that would only happen once all this was over.

'This is the best option because her jealousy and anger are the foundation of her low self-esteem.'

I wasn't exactly sure if my analysis was correct, but it had to be close. Her scummy family had abandoned her, which traumatized her. The experience had brought down her self-esteem, and she basically blamed herself for everything. The thought of getting abandoned had been plaguing Jung Ha-Yan's mind since then.

Jung Ha-Yan was always anxious, and that emotion had been her driving force to becoming even stronger. She had always been becoming even stronger because of the anxiety that she would get abandoned if she weren't strong enough.

After the short greeting, Jung Ha-Yan quickly ran and stood beside me.

Han Sora smiled with relief. It was like she had handed the bomb she was holding to someone else.

'Don't make it so obvious that you're happy.'

I was sure the current situation was like heaven to her.

“Did you make preparations?” I asked.

“Y-Yes. A l-l-little bit,” Jung Ha-Yan answered.

‘I’ve seen your spells, and they’re deadly.’

"You don’t have to push yourself, Ha-Yan. As I’ve mentioned before, this is just a mock battle and nothing else. I just need some data, that’s all. You’ll hurt yourself if you push yourself, so think of it as practice. You understand, right?” I asked.

“Yes, I-I-I understand,” she stuttered.

She definitely didn't listen to me, as she had the habit of not listening to other people during tense situations like this. She was holding my left arm so strongly that my arm was starting to get numb. I actually got worried that she would inadvertently break my arm, as her Strength was pretty high despite being a mage.

“The mock battle will take place in this forest, and there aren't any explicit rules. You can do whatever you want, so do whatever you want,” I told her.

“O-Okay, I will. I’ll do that. When is… Cha Hee-Ra coming?” she asked.

“She’ll be here soon,” I answered.

“I’m here, darling. It’s been a while, second girlfriend. How long has it been? Have you been doing well?” Cha Hee-Ra chimed in.

“…”

“I haven’t eaten because I rushed over here. It’s okay if I grab a bite before starting, right?” she asked.

“Do whatever you want,” I replied.

“You guys should eat, too. You… Han Sora of the Blue Guild. You should go and eat as well,” she suggested.

“No, I…”

“Don’t decline,” she interrupted.

“Okay.”

It seemed that it was difficult for Cha Hee-Ra to become the epitome of ladylike. She started speaking bluntly the moment she got off her griffon. She was acting like her usual self, looking relaxed and all, but Jung Ha-Yan looked kind of nervous.

Cha Hee-Ra was giving off an air of invincibility. I was worried that Cha Hee-Ra would lose, but Cha Hee-Ra's overall demeanor made it look like there was no way she would lose to Jung Ha-Yan.

Jung Ha-Yan was acting cautiously, while Cha Hee-Ra was acting like the powerful, authoritative figure she had always been.

“Let’s just sit down and eat,” Cha Hee-Ra suggested.

I wondered if it was even necessary for us to eat together, but it didn’t seem like a bad idea. Talking and eating together like this would help ease the negative emotions. It was a process to help them realize that they were comrades, not enemies.

The large sack on Cha Hee-Ra's back caught my attention.

I wondered why she brought a sack that was bigger than her, so I checked it with Mind's Eye.

‘Weapons and armor.’

Cha Hee-Ra looked as if she had come out for a walk, but she was actually prepared for the upcoming fight. It seemed that even she believed that Jung Ha-Yan was powerful.

‘She believes that she won't be able to withstand Jung Ha-Yan's spells without any armor.'

Cha Hee-Ra had also realized that Jung Ha-Yan's spells had become so strong that she couldn't deflect them with her bare hands anymore.

‘I’m sure she can win.’

To put it simply, Jung Ha-Yan had the upper hand, so this battle would be decided

based on who had more experience than the two.

The Mercenary Queen was an experienced figure who had participated in many battles, and every single life-and-death situation during those battles had been engraved on her body. Even if she went berserk, her experience would remain and help her.

The last-minute meal soon began, and Cha Hee-Ra started enjoying her meal.

Jung Ha-Yan wasn't touching her food at all, and there was an uncomfortable silence around us that made me feel pretty uncomfortable. Of course, I wasn't the only one suffering the same plight, as Han Sora was no longer smiling.

I felt like I had to say something, so I just used the topic earlier to speak.

“As I mentioned earlier, I want you guys to fight, but I don't want you to push yourselves…”

“I know,” Cha Hee-Ra said.

“Don’t go too far, and if something happens, there are people on standby who can help. We've also prepared quite a few safety devices, so you don’t have to hold back too much,” I added.

“Why are there so many rules? We shouldn’t push ourselves, but we shouldn’t hold back either?” she grumbled.

“…”

“I understood the gist of it. I'll get ready, then. By the way, I suggest you stay away as far as possible, darling. You're giving off an erotic scent, so stay away; I don't want to get distracted,” she warned.

‘Why do you have to say it like that, noona? What erotic scent?’

“It’s annoying having to wear it every time, and it’s bothersome having to carry around this sack. They don’t even sell the Infinity Bag anymore. If I had known this was going to happen, I would’ve bought a bag or two when I had the chance,” she said.

'I have a ton of those bags.'

However, I didn't need to mention that because she looked busy equipping her cool black armor.

Obviously, I wasn't used to watching her do that, and it was completely different from her usual outfit. As she mentioned earlier, the armor looked so heavy that it felt burdensome just wearing it.

Of course, it probably wasn't heavy for Cha Hee-Ra, but I was sure it was heavy for the vanguards who weren't as strong as her. They wouldn't be able to equip even a part of the armor, let alone the entire set. In addition, The way she was holding a greatsword in one hand and an axe in the other made her look like a mythical warrior.

'How domineering… '

Jung Ha-Yan probably felt the same way. She was quiet, but I could see the anxiety brewing in her eyes.

"Are you nervous?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"N-N-Not really," Jung Ha-Yan answered.

"Relax. It's just a mock battle, anyway. Well, there's probably more on the line for you than me. Park Mijin was pretty strong," she said.

'What are you doing, noona?'

"She was so strong that it hurt my pride a bit. Don't overdo it, second girlfriend. The way I see it, the result is pretty obvious. Honestly, if it weren't for my darling's request, I wouldn't even be here because it feels like I'm giving you another chance. Anyway, do your best," she added.

'Stop, noona. You can stop now.'

[This is really entertaining. Aren't you going to start it?]

'Ji-Hye noona, you stop, too. Shit.'

"…"

I got nervous because the atmosphere was so tense that it was palpable.

Cha Hee-Ra's meaningless remark was probably her way of saying she wanted Jung Ha-Yan to go all out. It made sense as Cha Hee-Ra had always been the type of person to start everything with a bang and end everything with a bang.

"Did I not tell you to suppress your killing intent before me?" Cha Hee-Ra asked.

"I-I-I was frustrated… I was annoyed… Really…" Jung Ha-Yan mumbled quietly.

I was starting to feel really satisfied with Cha Hee-Ra's suggestion about how I should keep my distance from them. I figured that no one would be safe once the two monsters collided.

"L-Let's hurry up and leave, sir. Hurry!" Han Sora urged.

"Okay…"

"We have to leave now. W-We have to go now. I'm telling you, we have to go now. Right now…" she repeated.

"Wait, hold one. Let's wait—"

"We have to leave now…" she said.

"Why are you in such a hurry?" I asked.

"We have to leave now, you bastard!" she cursed.

Shrieeek!

The birds in the forest suddenly took off into the skies with a shrill cry.

'Shit, that scared me.'

I turned to the two monsters, and I saw Cha Hee-Ra smiling at Jung Ha-Yan.

Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan was mumbling something as she gradually lowered her

head.

I thought it would be best if I gave them the signal to start, but it wouldn't fit the situation at all. Jung Ha-Yan bit her lips as her eyes became bloodshot. Blood was flowing down her lips as well, but she seemed like she didn't care.

"You might lose him if you keep this up," Cha Hee-Ra provoked.

Booooooom! Craaaaaaack!

A powerful explosion tore apart the ground beneath Cha Hee-Ra, sending her flying several meters into the air. The red-headed monster grinned crookedly, and a satisfied light fleeted across her eyes.

"All right, let's run!" I ordered and immediately turned around to get onto my griffon.

"Run!" I yelled.

"Don't leave me. Don't leave me… Don't leave me here!" Han Sora screamed.

"…"

"Please, please!'' she begged.

"Hurry up and run!" I ordered.

"Y-You bastard! I told you not to leave me! *Heuuung*… Don't leave me! *Heuk!* Don't leave me hereee!" she cried.

CHAPTER 669
OVERCOMING THE WALL (5)

I pitied Han Sora as she ran to me with all her might while limping.

The way she tripped over a stone while doing her best to run was a sad scene one would often see in movies. I swear to God that I had no intentions of leaving her behind, but I instinctively patted the griffon's back. Actually, before I patted the griffon's back, Whitefall tried to abandon Han Sora and even me.

"Don't leave me! Don't leave me!" Han Sora yelled.

'I'm sorry, Sora. I think it's too late. You can survive, right? Right?'

The griffon slowly took to the skies, and Han Sora asserted her right to survive as she yelled even louder. I told myself that I needed to take Han Sora with me and that I couldn't abandon her here, but the frightened Whitefall wouldn't listen to me.

There was a reason why the wild animals of this forest had run away.

Whitefall had been trained, but it was still an animal, so I couldn't really criticize it.

I had to run. Otherwise, everything would be put on hold, and the mysterious erotic scent Cha Hee-Ra had mentioned would make her run toward me. If the simple mock battle became a dirty fight, I might end up in a situation that I wouldn't be able to handle.

If that were to happen, the situation would turn out differently than what I had in mind.

Han Sora was competent, so she should be able to endure it for a few hours, right?

"*Haa… haa…* I said don't leave me! You bastard!! *Heuuung…*" Han Sora cried out.

She extended her hand out and cast a spell.

'Ah, shit.'

Whitefall groaned and started struggling.

'You cast a curse. Wow, your personality is really… I guess there's a reason you're a black mage, Han Sora.'

"Hurry, Miss Sora!" I yelled.

"*Pant, pant, pant,* wait… wait… *Ah!*" she exclaimed.

I decided to show Han Sora that I had no plans of abandoning her in the first place by extending my hand out toward her. I barely managed to grab her hand, and the curse on Whitefall was immediately cleansed, allowing Whitefall to flap his wings.

Booooooooom!

A mysterious shockwave struck Whitefall.

"*Kyaaaaaaaah!*"

"*Ugh!*"

It was chaotic, but I knew what was going on.

Whitefall was falling to the ground. I wasn't sure what those two monsters were doing to generate such powerful shockwaves, but I started thinking about what I should do if Whitefall struck the ground like this. Fortunately, Whitefall managed to recover in time.

'What the? How did he do it?'

Whitefall was lazy, and he had been making Kim Hyun-Sung's griffon do all the hard work so that he would continue to receive benefits without doing anything, so what he had done just now was definitely not part of his skills.

I looked around and saw quite a few artifacts attached to Whitefall's saddle. The artifacts were obviously the safety devices that would allow Whitefall to recover and make sure that his rider would remain safe throughout the ride.

These artifacts had to have helped Whitefall find his orientation and balance, and I was surprised by the revelation because I never really thought that the overboard griffon set-up would actually become useful.

'I guess this is why people always say that one should wear their seatbelt.'

I couldn't understand why people were spending a ton of money on magic belts, artifacts, and several utility artifacts, but I finally understood them. I even thought about equipping utility artifacts because I was still not used to using my wings.

I nodded with satisfaction and turned to my precious guild member.

I was sincerely worried that she was shocked by the abrupt change in the situation.

"Are you okay, Miss Sora?"

"*Heuk…* I-I'm okay…" Han Sora replied.

"I"m glad. I think it's best if we move as fast as possible," I suggested.

"…"

"Also…" I paused.

"…"

"I'll make sure to give you a generous incentive with a special bonus once we return…" I stopped.

"…"

"Anyway, let's hurry up and start," I continued.

"*Heuuk…*"

I wanted to see exactly what was going on, but getting away from the fight was our top priority at the moment.

'Can she win?'

No, she had to win. If Cha Hee-Ra were to lose, Jung Ha-Yan would run rampant.

Once there was a decent distance between them and us, I activated the Telescope and saw Jung Ha-Yan and Cha Hee-Ra fighting in the distance.

The shockwave earlier had to have been generated during their warmup.

I couldn't even hear their conversation because of the cacophony of noises between them. Jung Ha-Yan's anger level was *extremely angry*. Her lips were bleeding, but she was still biting them.

Meanwhile, Cha Hee-Ra looked as if she was on the brink of going berserk.

"Looks like they haven't actually started fighting yet, Miss Sora. Make sure you get enough data," I reminded her.

"Okay."

"We're going to keep running simulations with the data we'll get today," I told her.

"…"

'I really wasn't going to abandon you, Sora. Really. Stop looking at me like that.'

"*Ahem…* I'm sorry about earlier. Whitefall was startled, so…" I trailed off.

"…"

'I'm really not that scummy.'

"Anyway, let's get to work. You have to get your transfer, Miss Sora. Don't you want to transfer?" I asked.

"I-I want to," Han Sora answered.

"Then hurry up and turn on the Goddess' Mirror. *Ah*, by the way, who do *you* think will win, Miss Sora?" I asked.

"I'm… not sure… I already told you that I couldn't decide when I saw the reports…"

“It’s just a simple question, so you can answer however you want,” I interrupted her.

“Honestly, I can’t imagine Miss Jung Ha-Yan losing, but… for some reason… I feel like she’s going to lose,” she answered.

“Do you have any proof?” I asked.

“I believe it’s a difference between their mental state. She seemed kind of frightened, and it feels like she's already thinking that she's going to lose,” she answered.

‘Makes sense.’

I nodded at her reply.

There was definitely a difference between someone thinking that they would lose and someone thinking that they would definitely win. It wouldn’t have mattered if that were the only reason, but there was a huge difference in confidence between the two.

Cha Hee-Ra was laughing while Jung Ha-Yan looked sad.

I was sure that the difference in their mindset would determine the winner.

Of course, the main point of this battle was to see if Jung Ha-Yan would be able to overcome her wall by herself.

And that was when Jung Ha-Yan cast a spell.

-…!!!

The number of spells she cast at once was exactly…

‘Eight?’

“What the? What’s going on? Did she just cast eight spells at once?” I questioned.

They were basic spells, but she cast *eight* spells at the same time.

‘What is this? Isn’t that really difficult?’

Against warriors, a mage's chances of victory depended on how many spells they could cast at once. Basically, if a mage could cast two spells at once, they could defeat two warriors, and if they could cast three, they could defeat three warriors at once.

The more spells a mage could cast at the same time, the better their chances of victory against a powerful warrior. After all, even though warriors could split attacks into two with their weapons, they would eventually get overwhelmed by a mage who could cast multiple spells from all cardinal directions.

The mage of Rafael's party, which was on the verge of getting delisted, could multi-cast. He could cast three spells at once, and he succeeded in buying three seconds against Kim Hyun-Sung, which meant a spell was a second worth of time.

The mage could cast three spells at once, but Jung Ha-Yan could cast eight spells at the same time, and…

“She can channel the next spell while casting a spell,” I said.

I finally realized what the people meant about how high-level mages wouldn't have any issues fighting someone, regardless of their opponent's strength. Jung Ha-Yan's defense was airtight.

‘Is her past life really stronger than her? Really? I think she's already really strong… ’

Since Jung Ha-Yan had channeled her second spell while casting her first spell, she was able to cast her second spell virtually instantaneously, which meant that there was basically no cooldown between her spells.

She was like a mage capable of casting spells with just a press of a button, like in a game. I was sure whose job wasn't mage would make a big deal out of this, as Jung Ha-Yan had basically shattered the balance of the game.

As if proving that she was strong, she was forcing Cha Hee-Ra to defend herself.

Craaaaaaack! Kabooooom!!!

- D-D-Dieee!!

‘No, don’t kill her.’

Craaack! Booooom!

- D-Die! Just die! Die!! Dieee!! Hurry up and die!!

Craaaaack!

Jung Ha-Yan was so strong that she was like a natural disaster. Honestly, I couldn't even see Cha Hee-Ra's figure in the Goddess' Mirror. I switched to the Telescope and got a closer look at Cha Hee-Ra.

My jaw dropped to the ground when I saw Cha Hee-Ra taking almost every attack possible out there. I saw fire, wind, earth, and even lightning battering her from all directions.

I wasn't sure if Jung Ha-Yan was watching her, but she probably couldn't see anything at the moment. However, Jung Ha-Yan was convinced that Cha Hee-Ra was still alive, as she hadn't cast Anemone's Eye.

At the moment, all Jung Ha-Yan could see were dust and trees.

'How is this even possible?'

Cha Hee-Ra split the oncoming energy projectiles using her axe and greatsword while she dodged the spells that she could dodge. As for the AoE spells, she gauged them in an instant and withstood those she could withstand with her Endurance and the Magic Resistance her armor had bestowed upon her.

Of course, she avoided the AoE spells that were too strong for her to take, as well as spells that would shred her resistance and defense.

At the same time, Cha Hee-Ra danced around the battlefield, hacking away at the spells raining down on her from above.

A large block of ice was annihilated by her axe, and a scorching fireball was split into two by her greatsword. She blocked wind blades using the armor on her shoulder and destroyed a magic orb with a punch using her gauntlet.

I had seen her fight Jung Ha-Yan, but she looked completely different today. I always thought about how cool Kim Hyun-Sung looked every time he fought, but unlike those fights, I couldn't take my eyes off of her.

Cha Hee-Ra was giving me a show of raw pure strength that didn't rely on any swordsmanship or skills.

'She's overwhelmingly powerful.'

Craaaaaack! Kabooooooooom!!!

A loud explosion echoed.

Jung Ha-Yan immediately started channeling another spell.

"What's going on? What is that?" I asked.

The skies above us had changed colors, and a giant shadow was cast on the forest.

The clouds parted, and a large meteor plummeted toward the forest, carrying with it a powerful wind pressure that tore everything apart in front of it.

It seemed that the spells Jung Ha-Yan had cast earlier were just a distraction to hide the fact that she had been channeling such a powerful spell.

The oncoming meteor was bigger than the meteor that the Republican mages had cast by working together, and I believed that this meteor was actually bigger than the spell Belial had hurled at Laios to turn it into a boundless sea of fire.

I stared agape at the surreal sight.

'Is Cha Hee-Ra going to die?'

I couldn't help but question if Cha Hee-Ra could withstand the oncoming meteor.

There was no way a human could withstand such a powerful spell. Should I do something? Had I underestimated Jung Ha-Yan too much and overestimated Hee-Ra noona?

I took a closer look as many thoughts filled my head, and I saw Cha Hee-Ra laughing maniacally at the sight. She seemed thrilled that there was a meteor making a beeline for her.

- *Hahahahaha!*

'What the… She's crazy.'

- *Ha… Hahahahahahaha!*

'Noona, you haven't gone mad, have you? You haven't, right?'

- This is fuckin' fun. Shit.

'It's not fun.'

- *Hahahahahaha!!!*

CHAPTER 670
OVERCOMING THE WALL (6)

‘Noona, is this really the time to laugh?’

If I were in Cha Hee-Ra’s shoes, I would have kneeled and shouted for mercy.

I was sure that anyone in her shoes would have done the same.

Not only was it questionable if Kim Hyun-Sung could even survive that meteor, but there was no way he would laugh in the face of it.

He wasn’t that type of person, and Jung Ha-Yan’s meteor instilled despair in the hearts of those looking at it.

The despair was so pronounced that I couldn't help but think, *'Cha Hee-Ra is dead; there's no way she can block and survive that.'*

The meteor was like the Great Demon King's ultimate move against the hero party.

It wasn't an ordinary skill, and it contained a might that exceeded the limits of what the continent's mages could show. Regardless, the red-headed monster caught my attention more than the meteor, which was pretty ironic, in my opinion.

- *Hahahahahaha!!*

I couldn’t understand it, but Cha Hee-Ra probably found this situation entertaining, as it had been quite a while since she had a good fight. She had been visiting the forest filled with monsters to relieve her stress, but there was no way fighting paltry monsters would satisfy her. She desperately wanted to fight to the point that she was losing reason, and her wish had finally come true.

The fight wasn’t over yet, but she probably felt a sense of accomplishment, which might be what she had been looking for. She seemed drunk, as she had always been obsessed with fighting, and her eyes had turned bloodshot.

She had gone berserk, which granted her Strength in exchange for her Intelligence.

Her Strength had exceeded the limits of humanity but… I wasn't sure if she could withstand the oncoming meteor. Despite that, she spread her arms out and actually started running toward the meteor.

I could no longer hear her laughter because it had been replaced by a monster's growls.

Kabooooooooooooom!!!

Cha Hee-Ra's axe reached the meteor.

Craaaaaaaaaaaaaack!!!

And then she swung her greatsword toward the meteor…

A loud cracking noise echoed, and the overwhelmingly heavy meteor put all of its weight on her, causing her feet to get buried in the ground. If it weren't for her impossibly high Strength at the moment, she would have died right there and then.

However, the enhanced stats and her artifacts had allowed her to achieve the impossible.

'I think it's still going to fall. It's going to fall. You're not trying to get crushed to death, are you, noona?'

Cha Hee-Ra swung her axe again.

Craaaaaaaaaack!!

The meteor quivered violently, and Jung Ha-Yan bit her lips. My lips felt dry as I watched one person trying to slam the meteor into the ground and the other trying to stop it from hitting the ground.

'Do I need to go and save her? Everything will get ruined if Cha Hee-Ra dies… We'll have no choice but to get on Noah's Ark right away.'

Craaaaaaaaaaack!

Cha Hee-Ra swung her axe again, and she was driven deeper into the ground.

'Is she trying to destroy it before it completely falls on the ground?'

I wasn't sure if that was possible, and I wasn't sure if she could do such a thing.

- Die!!! Y-Y-You monster! Monster!!! Just die already! You monster!!

Jung Ha-Yan screamed, accusing Cha Hee-Ra of being a monster when she was a monster herself. A loud cracking noise echoed, and Cha Hee-Ra's arm burst open, revealing the white bones underneath.

Cha Hee-Ra's also cracked beneath the pressure and weight.

I couldn't help but gulp.

When she was buried shin-deep in the ground, she swung her axe again.

Craaaaaaaaaaaack!!!

'I don't think it's going to break. It's not going to break. Cha Hee-Ra is going to die, shit. No, she can't die.'

It seemed that Cha Hee-Ra was losing her strength because she had pressed her axe against the meteor rather than swinging it toward it. Honestly, I was convinced that the battle was over, and even if she managed to destroy the meteor, it would be impossible for her to withstand the explosion that would come afterward.

My plan was ruined, and I thought about ending all this, but…

Kabooooooooooom!

"What the…"

I heard another explosion.

Booooooooooooom!!

There was another explosion.

Kabooooooooooooooooom!!

I saw Cha Hee-Ra slamming her head into the meteor.

'Why is she headbutting it?'

Astonishingly, I heard a crack.

Boooooooooooooom!!!

Spider web-like cracks spread across the meteor, and the shock inside of me reached a crescendo until it finally burst, like the meteor. I thought I had seen everything there was to see out there, but I still chuckled dumbfoundedly at the surreal sight before me.

A deafening explosion echoed, and the meteor exploded, sending debris flying in all directions. Jung Ha-Yan's eyes were wide open as she stared at the absurd sight in disbelief. Honestly, I thought her expression was a better sight than mine.

- Just die already!

Cha Hee-Ra welcomed the rain of debris with a satisfied grin. Consecutive explosions echoed as Cha Hee-Ra either punched the debris or shattered every single one of them with her weapons.

Her hands moved incredibly fast while she used her legs to move in a straight line toward the floating Jung Ha-Yan. Her accuracy wasn't as high as Kim Hyun-Sung's accuracy, but she didn't seem to care about her injuries.

Jung Ha-Yan disappeared when Cha Hee-Ra was halfway to her.

'Teleport.'

"Is she distancing herself?" I mumbled.

Distances were irrelevant to Jung Ha-Yan because of her Teleport. The second most important variable in a fight between mages and warriors was distance, and Jung Ha-Yan was capable of kiting Cha Hee-Ra from afar with her Teleport.

Cha Hee-Ra managed to stop the meteor, but she had sacrificed a lot. Jung Ha-Yan

had to use a ton of mana, but I was sure Cha Hee-Ra's Stamina would run out sooner than Jung Ha-Yan.

Swoosh!

Jung Ha-Yan cast Teleport and appeared behind Cha Hee-Ra.

-…!

I wasn't sure if Jung Ha-Yan's plan was to fire a spell at close range, but Cha Hee-Ra was sent flying away. It seemed she didn't expect Jung Ha-Yan to get close to her.

Jung Ha-Yan had moved so fast just now that I couldn't keep up with her, even with my telescope. The way she applied various debuffs on Cha Hee-Ra reminded me of a superhuman I saw in an old comic.

I turned to look at the distant sight with my own two eyes and saw a kaleidoscope of dazzling lights. The red-headed monster was trying its best to reach the mage, but Jung Ha-Yan's kiting was perfect. Cha Hee-Ra would either get hit by debris, or Jung Ha-Yan would widen the distance between them using Teleport.

How could Cha Hee-Ra even catch up with a mage capable of casting Teleport almost instantaneously? I took a closer look at Cha Hee-Ra and saw that she wasn't anxious despite the fact. It was more like she was annoyed.

Jung Ha-Yan couldn't quite deal the final blow as she had to keep on teleporting and kiting Cha Hee-Ra at the same time.

However, it seemed that she was aware of that as well because she was surreptitiously doing something in mid-air while kiting.

'She's drawing a magic circle in the sky.'

The magic circle was drawn. The debris took to the skies and started falling like rain on Cha Hee-Ra.

"She's not human…" Han Sora unknowingly muttered.

'This is why she's called Mankind's Final Weapon.'

The word *extraordinary* in the dictionary existed because of Jung Ha-Yan. Honestly, I was suspicious if those two were actually human beings.

“I think… Miss Jung Ha-Yan is going to win. She’s… winning. She’s winning!” Han Sora yelled.

“We’ll see,” I said.

“Miss Jung Ha-Yan… How can a… human… Of course, Cha Hee-Ra is strong as well but look at Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I can’t even explain how she's able to cast spells continuously, even in such a stressful situation.

"She’s not simply using magic. She also knows how to fight, and is the word *adaptable* even the right word to describe her? Her skills are definitely God-given. I think that's the perfect way to describe her skills. Really…” she said.

“It is pretty amazing. I honestly didn’t think they’d have such an intense fight,” I commented.

“I underestimated Miss Jung Ha-Yan too much,” she said.

“…”

“What's going to happen once Miss Jung Ha-Yan wins, Sub Guild Master?” she asked.

“Ha-Yan will lose,” I told her.

“But…”

“No buts. Ha-Yan will lose,” I repeated.

“…”

“…”

“You’re not trying to interfere, are you?” she asked.

‘Who does she think I am?’

“How can I interfere here? The two of them will die if I do such a thing. I just told you

that Ha-Yan will lose because that's what I can see…" I answered.

Han Sora looked at me as if she were saying, *"Are you blind? Jung Ha-Yan is clearly cornering Cha Hee-Ra."*

However, I wasn't lying when I said that I could see it. Yes, I was the only one who could see it. Jung Ha-Yan's mana was being exhausted at incredible speeds, but she still hadn't landed a critical hit. Of course, Cha Hee-Ra would run out of Stamina first, but despite that, I had to cast my vote on Cha Hee-Ra.

'It's because her attributes are changing.'

[???]

[Attribute - Madwoman Crazy About Blood - ???]

[???]

'She's about to overcome the wall.'

That was the only explanation I could come up with because Cha Hee-Ra was the one who talked about how she had run into a wall and how she would overcome it with the right opportunity and a bit more effort.

'Are you really going to overcome it? I think she's about to overcome it.'

She was treating this fight as a stepping stone for stone, and in a way, this fight was all about mindset.

'I'm strong. I can become even stronger!' and *'Please die.'*

Victory would belong to those who had the right mindset.

Cha Hee-Ra laughed boisterously. I wasn't sure whether she was laughing because she had just realized that she was about to overcome the wall or her fight with Jung Ha-Yan was just *that* entertaining, but she was laughing like a madwoman as if she was really enjoying this.

She was getting bounced around, scorched by fire, and pelted by boulders, Cha Hee-Ra kept on swinging her weapon while laughing. I honestly had no idea why she was

doing it.

As soon as Cha Hee-Ra's axe landed on the ground, the ground quivered violently, and I heard the shrill cry of the air as Cha Hee-Ra's axe tore it apart. To her, this fight had to be a playground.

Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan's eyes were full of tears.

She was throwing all sorts of spells at Cha Hee-Ra, but she was obviously losing confidence. The crazy madwoman was the one in the middle of Jung Ha-Yan's tempestuous magic storm, but it looked like it was the other way around.

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan is going to win. Please…" Han Sora said.

'Ha-Yan needs to lose for my plan to work.'

Han Sora had spent a lot of time with Jung Ha-Yan, so she could feel Jung Ha-Yan's desperation. However, the Mercenary Queen took a step forward within the magic storm as if she were mockingly denying Han Sora's prayer.

The way she looked straight at Jung Ha-Yan made it even more clear that she was winning. She took another step and another step. Cha Hee-Ra's figure emitted a faint glow as she continued walking toward Jung Ha-Yan with a smile.

In the end, her efforts finally bore fruit.

[Attribute - Madwoman Crazy About Blood - Mythic Rank]

[Intelligence is decreased while all stats are increased excluding Intelligence and Luck.]

Rather than scaling the wall to overcome it, she had obliterated the wall itself.

Cha Hee-Ra Coin was going to the moon.

"She finally reached her limits…" I muttered in astonishment.

Cha Hee-Ra had obliterated the door that humans couldn't even reach and took a step beyond that door.

CHAPTER 671
HAN SORA'S DEBUT (1)

The masked scum…

'How the hell did Jin Cheong handle Hee-Ra noona?'

It wouldn't be an understatement to call Cha Hee-Ra the continent's strongest human being.

'Actually.'

Our Hyun-Sung had acknowledged Cha Hee-Ra's strength, but he had never described her to be this strong. Clearly, she didn't awaken during the war in our first lives, as Cha Hee-Ra probably didn't have the golden opportunity to ponder about herself and fight with all her might.

'No, that's not it either. I'm sure she fought the Four Angels.'

I started thinking that perhaps Kim Hyun-Sung wasn't aware of Cha Hee-Ra's awakening. I didn't know when, where, and how she disappeared, but if one thought about it properly, one would find many things holding her back.

She was treating the Red Mercenary Guild as if it were her own child, and she wasn't the type to hesitate in protecting those she cherished.

The reason I didn't talk to her about Noah's Ark was because I knew she would decline the offer. I obviously wanted to take her with me, but I knew better than anyone that she wanted to die with her guild.

In that sense, the enemy had probably used the people she cherished, tricked her, and trapped her just like that. Like what they had done against Kim Hyun-Sung, they probably used all sorts of dirty tricks to bring her outside. I wasn't sure what method they used, but one fact I was sure of was that Jin Cheong was the culprit.

'That asshole. It's a good thing I got rid of him so quickly.'

If he had managed to gather the Republican forces and join forces with the Outer God, his chances of winning against the continent would have been forty percent at the very least.

Cha Hee-Ra's unbelievable behavior was enough to make me think of other things for a moment. She walked as if Jung Ha-Yan's spells weren't a big deal.

Obviously, Jung Ha-Yan looked gloomy and desperate.

They didn't have to continue fighting for me to know who was going to win, and Jung Ha-Yan knew that better than anyone else. I was sure Ha-Yan felt Cha Hee-Ra's change as she reached new heights.

Jung Ha-Yan's spells weren't even working on Cha Hee-Ra anymore because her magic resistance seemed to be based on her Endurance.

- *Kgh...* D-Dont come! Don't come any closer!

She was casting spells with desperation, but it was no use.

Jung Ha-Yan's casting was starting to slow down, and I was sure that it was all because of her mindset. She was probably already convinced of her defeat. She could no longer cast Teleport because she was trying her best to stop Cha Hee-Ra from walking toward her, but how could she stop Cha Hee-Ra, who had already obliterated the wall?

In the end, Jung Ha-Yan cast a protection spell on herself.

I could see what she was trying to do.

'A draw.'

Cha Hee-Ra's attribute would eventually go on cooldown, so Jung Ha-Yan probably thought of buying time until then. I understood that she didn't want to lose, but could she not see that she would look pathetic by forcing out a draw?

"Let's go down," I suggested.

"C-Can we go down?" Han Sora asked.

“I’m going to use the potion I used during the war with the Republic. They'll calm down soon,” I told her.

- *Kgh, heuk…*

Booooooooom!!

Jung Ha-Yan's barrier would tremble every time Cha Hee-Ra attacked it using her axe.

The barrier had become so faint that it looked like it would shatter at any moment.

- *Heuuuung, heuk, heuuuuung…*

‘Stop crying so hard, Ha-Yan.’

- *Heuuuuuuuung…* No*. Kgh, hiccup, heuuuuung…*

Jung Ha-Yan had already given up. She no longer had the will to fight, and Cha Hee-Ra was looking down at her.

‘Is she back?’

No, she was still in her Berserk state, but it seemed that she was no longer interested in Jung Ha-Yan. I thought flying a bit higher would be safer, but I sighed in relief when I saw Cha Hee-Ra exiting her Berserk state.

‘Can you finally turn it off and on, noona?’

- *Heuuuuung… Kgh, heuuuung… Hiccup.*

- *Whoo…*

- *Kgh, kggggh…*

- Good job, second girlfriend.

Cha Hee-Ra immediately turned around and left.

“Miss Sora, go to Ha-Yan first,” I instructed her.

“What? Okay,” Han Sora answered.

“I’ll join right after I talk to Hee-Ra noona for a bit,” I told her.

“Please… hurry,” she begged.

“Okay.”

I walked over to Cha Hee-Ra, and I saw her staring deeply at me.

‘Wait, is she still in her Berserk state?’

I couldn’t help but walk on eggshells around her, but there didn’t seem to be any issues. She looked like she was smacking her lips, but it was more like she could still feel the adrenaline coursing through her veins.

The forest was devastated, so I found it difficult to find a place to stand properly. I tripped unknowingly, and Cha Hee-Ra rushed over toward me to stabilize me.

“Did it go according to plan?” Cha Hee-Ra asked.

“How do you feel, noona?” I asked.

“It’s kind of hard to suppress it because the fight has just ended,” she answered.

“No, I’m asking about how you feel about it,” I said.

“I don't feel that excited because the result was within my expectations, but if you’re asking about my mood, I feel good. I’m kind of struggling right now, but I think I managed to control it to a certain degree… I already told you that I can control it and that I can overcome the wall,” she explained.

“You thought you'd become as strong as you are right now?” I asked.

Cha Hee-Ra didn’t answer, but her bright smile confirmed it.

“Hurry and go to your second girlfriend. Tell her that I had fun,” she said.

“You’re not going to come with me?” I asked.

“I did all this, so what’s the point of me going? I’ll probably just make her angry. I also have things I need to take care of as well… I got a lot more than I thought, so I don’t want to forget this feeling…” she replied.

“Shouldn’t you get your body checked up first?” I suggested.

“I don’t need to do it right now… as long as I get it done today. Come to the guild later tonight, darling,” she instructed.

“…”

“It’s common sense that the winner takes the trophy. Don’t you agree?” she asked.

‘No, noona. That kind of common sense doesn’t exist… ’

Cha Hee-Ra looked like a lion playing with its prey.

‘I should go, right?’

Obviously, I had to go. I had no choice, after all.

“Make sure you’re ready. *Oh*, and about that perfume you were going to use on me, I mean, the exotic-scented potion. Bring all of it,” she demanded.

‘Why?’

“I’m leaving,” she said.

“Okay. Congratulations, noona,” I said.

“It was nothing,” she said. She looked down at herself and clenched her fist. It was as if she was saying that she had never been wrong, and the way she walked made me think that she had become even more confident in herself. She had gotten what she wanted and had confirmed that she still had more walls to obliterate.

However, Cha Hee-Ra seemed to be having fun while staring at the next wall she had to overcome.

Ordinary people would probably be depressed to see a higher summit after reaching the summit of the mountain they thought was the highest. They would probably fall

into despair at the possibility that there were endless walls to overcome.

However, Cha Hee-Ra obviously didn't think the same as them.

'I don't understand her.'

I was sure Jung Ha-Yan wasn't all that different from Cha Hee-Ra in her past life.

She probably laughed at the walls standing before her and was happy that she had more walls to destroy. Obviously, she wasn't like that at the moment. The wall standing before her brought her infinite stress, nothing more, nothing less. As expected, she was still crying, and she was crying so hard as if her house had burned down.

- *Heuuung… Kgh,* I don't like this…

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan… Well… you see…

- *Heuuuuuuuung… Hiccup, hiccup.*

Han Sora—Jung Ha-Yan suppressor—was thinking about how she should go about this. Han Sora seemed to be waiting for me to go to Jung Ha-Yan, so she had to have been panicking

'She looks really heartbroken.'

Jung Ha-Yan looked like she had let go of everything. She even pushed away Han Sora's hand, who was trying to comfort her.

'No, Ha-Yan. Don't do that.'

- Y-Y-You said I'll win… *Kgh… Heuk…*

- I'm sorr—

- You told me that I'll defeat her… *Heuk, heuuuk*. That's what you told me.

- I'm sorry, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I was… unaware… I'm sorry.

- *Kgh, kggh*. You said I'll win… You said I'll win!

Jung Ha-Yan was getting angry at Han Sora, but she was probably mad at herself.

The way she grabbed pieces of gravel on the ground and threw them at Han Sora made her look like she was throwing a tantrum. It seemed that she had decided to blame others, but it was clear that she still cherished Han Sora. If she were someone else, Jung Ha-Yan would've already turned them into minced meat.

- It's my fault… I was too… There was an issue with the tactic… I think it's my fault… I'll talk to the sub guild master about it, so please don't be too disappointed. I'll tell him that it's my fault.

- It's your fault. I-I-It's all your fault! *Heuk… Heuuuuk…*

-…

- I hate you. I really hate you, Han Sora. *Kgh… kgh…*

-… my fault.

- G-G-Go away! I don't want to see you! *Kgh…*

I was now close enough to hear their voices. Jung Ha-Yan had to have noticed me because she pushed away Han Sora and ran into my arms.

"I-It's Sora's fault…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

She looked desperate, and her pupils were quivering.

"Good job, Ha-Yan. You don't have to worry about the result since the point of this mock battle was to gather data. Victory or defeat doesn't really matter here. it's not like I'll hate you for it. I'm sure you're exhausted, so let's go home early and rest," I suggested.

Jung Ha-Yan looked extremely depressed.

'Don't be disappointed, Ha-Yan. I'm sure you'll overcome it. You can do it just like Cha Hee-Ra.'

Of course, it would only happen if Han Sora did her job.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Have you tried acting, Miss Sora? (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

Han Sora glanced at me, and her eyes were telling me not to do this to her.

'Leave your trainee days behind. It's time for your debut.'

Han Sora's debut was decided right then and there.

CHAPTER 672
HAN SORA'S DEBUT (2)

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young. I’m so happy to see you again after such a long time,” Sun Hee-Young greeted.

“I feel great seeing you for the first time in a while, Miss Hee-Young. As always, I feel comfortable around you. I don’t see the other guild members. Are they doing something else?” I asked.

“Mr. Deok-Gu, Miss Ye-Ri, Mr. Ki-Mo, Miss Jung-Yeon, and even Mr. Chang-Ryeol have been training together after they're done working. Miss Elena has been training with them as well. I heard they’re doing tactical training. Mr. Deok-Gu told them that we have no idea what's going to happen, so he told them to join him…” she replied.

‘That stupid pig… There he goes again doing stupid things.’

“I think Miss Ah-Young has been creating the shield and armor you requested… She rarely leaves her workshop, so it’s been a while since I’ve seen her. How have you been doing, Mr. Ki-Young? You don’t look so good. Have you recovered?” she asked.

“Yes, I think I’m fine. I’ve been having kind of a hard time physically recently… There’s nothing wrong with my health, so don’t worry,” I answered.

“But still…”

“Everyone is having a hard time. We only have sixteen days left, so we have to prepare as much as we can. It’s almost time to make the announcement to the continent, I need to refine our tactics, and since the majority of the tasks are in their final stages… I’m honestly more worried about you, Miss Hee-Young.

"I’m sure it’s difficult managing the guild while doing your own personal training… Mr. Hyun-Sung has completely taken his hands off of the guild tasks, and Miss Kim Mi-Young is rarely at her desk. Miss Lee Sang-Hee said she would help, but isn't your job extremely crucial as well?” I asked.

“Someone has to do it, and it's my task, so my answer is the same as yours, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Since we don’t have a lot of time, it’s only right to do whatever I can,” she replied.

“…”

“More importantly… if I don’t do this, I know you’ll be put in a tough situation,” she muttered quietly. I wasn’t sure why, but she was speaking ambiguously. She still had long hair and was wearing her usual neat priest uniform.

I would always have this thought every time I saw her, but there was a certain aura around her. It had been such a long time since I’d seen her that I couldn't even remember the last time I spent time alone with her.

Back then, we would often do volunteer work together, but…

‘We can’t do that now.’

We didn't have the luxury of time. She was busy with guild work, and I was busy with the committee work. We called or exchanged messages related to work, but we didn’t spend time talking and drinking tea. I had been playing with Jo Hye-Jin since she was one of my bodyguards, but Sun Hee-Young…

‘Our positions overlap.’

We wouldn't be effective together. She wasn't as bad as Jung Ha-Yan, and I felt bad for her as well because I had been relying on her a lot. If she were to cause trouble and become stubborn, I would have shown up to placate her.

However, she was the type of person who would do fine on her own. I could leave her alone without worrying that she wouldn't do her work. She was good at taking the initiative, and she could handle her work without any issues.

It wouldn't be an exaggeration to say that she was the reason the Blue Guild was still functioning at the moment, and it was all because Kim Hyun-Sung, Jo Hye-Jin, and even Kim Mi-Young weren't in the office at the moment.

I had been getting the feeling that she was better than Jo Hye-Jin when it came to administrative work, and it would be an insult to compare her to Kim Hyun-Sung.

‘I have to take care of her.’

I needed to express my gratitude somehow.

“What kind of tea would you like?” I asked.

“I’ll do it, Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” Sun Hee-Young offered.

“It’s fine. I want to make tea for you today. It’s not much, but I want you to know that I’m always grateful,” I told her.

“You don’t… have to…” she mumbled.

‘I’ll serve the tea to you today. Just sit down, noona. I’ll take care of it.’

“You can just stay seated,” I said.

“No, it’s fine,” she said.

“Please have a seat. Among the plant-type catalysts I've grown in my garden long ago, there’s one that helps with fatigue, so I made tea with it. It’s probably not as effective as fatigue recovery spells, but I’m sure it’ll help a little,” I explained.

“…”

“…”

“It smells nice,” she said with a smile. Her mood seemed to have improved, and it could be because of my extreme kindness. Regardless of the reason, I was glad that she could relax, even briefly.

Of course, she stared at me amicably. Her gaze toward me had always been the same, but she looked happier today than usual. She was smiling even as we talked, and I could understand it, as I had been smiling at her as well.

“How’s Alps doing?” I asked.

“She’s doing well in her training. Of course, we’ll have to wait and see if she can become a part of the party, but she seems passionate about it. She’s also been attending the training led by Mr. Deok-Gu,” Sun Hee-Young replied.

“I heard she follows you around often. I’m sure a lot is going through her head when she looks at you since you deserve to be admired by everyone…” I told her.

“No, that’s not…”

We talked about this a bit, and of course, we talked about theology and books we had been reading. She was a priest, so our hobbies were pretty similar.

She wasn't a fan of wine or playing chess, but if I were asked whom I had the most in common with, I would pick Sun Hee-Young. There was also Ji-Hye noona, but she was a workaholic, so we would always keep on talking about work whenever we met.

“By the way, regarding the book Father Basel wrote…” I mentioned.

“I read it as well. *Ah!* While we’re on that subject, since you mentioned that you were coming… ancient books were discovered a few months ago in a dungeon… I brought one because I thought you’d like it,” she said.

“That’s a coincidence. I thought the same thing,” I said.

Of course, I didn’t think that way, but when I took out a book from the Infinity Bag, Sun Hee-Young looked happy. We exchanged various conversations besides that, and to be honest, I had a good time to the point that I forgot the passage of time.

She probably felt the same way.

Just then, I noticed Sun Hee-Young seemingly in deep contemplation. She looked as if she was holding herself back from telling me what was on her mind. It was a behavior that reminded me of someone. She looked exactly like Kim Hyun-Sung right before confessing to me that he was a regressor. I wondered if she was suddenly going to confess that she was a regressor as well, but I didn't think so.

“Excuse me…” Sun Hee-Young said.

“Yes?”

“…”

“…”

'What's with this atmosphere?'

The atmosphere was serious, so the room got quiet.

Sun Hee-Young looked down and muttered, "It's nothing…"

"*Huh?*"

"There's something… I want to tell you after this is over…" she mumbled.

"You can tell me. Don't be shy," I told her.

"It's okay. I don't think it's the right time to tell you this… and I'm sure you're already having a headache from everything that's happening…" she declined.

"Then, I'll make time later," I said.

"I-I'll plan everything out," she stuttered.

"…"

"…"

"Well… look at the time," I said.

"I hope I didn't take too much of your time when you're busy," she said.

"No, it's fine. I came here to see how the guild was doing, and you've already told me many things. I needed a break as well, and I managed to rest thanks to you. I can't even remember the last time I was so comfortable drinking tea like this.

"Once everything is over… I really hope that I'll get the opportunity to do this more often," I told her.

'That's right, damn it. This is how you should spend your time when you get old.'

"Thank you for saying that…" she commented.

"I should be the one thanking you, Miss Hee-Young," I said.

“B-By the way, didn’t you say… you had a request for me… I almost forgot,” she reminded me.

‘Let's go to the main topic.’

“Are you curious about Rafael’s condition?” she asked.

‘Honestly, it’s about time we unplug him from life support. I don't really think he's going to wake up, anyway.’

I wanted to find out how the guild was doing through Sun Hee-Young, but there was an even more important reason behind my visit. Our time together was about to end, and she had to have remembered that I told her it was important because she looked curious about it.

“Can I ask why you visited us today?” Sun Hee-Young asked.

“It’s nothing big, but…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“I would like for you to give Miss Sora and I…”

“…”

“One each,” I requested.

“I don’t… understand what you’re talking about,” she said.

“It’s not a serious matter. If you’re uncomfortable using debuffs, you can use buffs as well. There’s something I would like to test, so…” I explained.

“Yes?”

“I know it’s a memory you don’t want to recall, but you’ve been there once before. It’ll be easier to understand if you think it’s because of that…” I continued.

“*Ah*.”

“There seems to be some left, or have you gotten rid of all of them?” I asked.

“Like in the report I sent you, there’s still some in my body. It’s somewhat different from holy power, but… is there something wrong?” she asked.

“Not really. There’s nothing wrong with you, and there aren't any side effects. I really don’t have any other intentions. I just want to research it so you don’t have to worry too much. *Ah*, please put it in the potion bottles,” I instructed her.

“Of course, as long as I’m being helpful,” she said.

“I’ll let you know once I get the results of my research,” I said.

“Okay, but where’s Miss Sora… Doesn’t she live with Miss Ha-Yan?” she asked.

“No, she’s been living elsewhere recently… She’ll be here soon,” I answered.

There was an unnecessarily long silence.

“Is it… okay?” Sun Hee-Young asked.

‘No, I don't think so.’

Seeing that Sun Hee-Young was asking about Jung Ha-Yan, she had to have realized the fact that Han Sora was Jung Ha-Yan’s suppressor.

‘It’s understandable.’

Even though Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora had been spending time at the magic tower while Sun Hee-Young had been spending her time at the guild, they were all in Lindel, so it wasn’t hard to notice that Jung Ha-Yan had been relying on Han Sora.

And that was when I heard knocking on the door.

“She must be here,” Sun Hee-Young said.

As soon as she opened the door, I saw Han Sora walking in slowly, looking all nervous.

Her dream was to be transferred out, and I thought she was willing to do whatever it took to achieve it, but she seemed discouraged about it now for some reason

“It’s been a while, Miss Sun Hee-Young,” Han Sora greeted.

“Yes, it has, Miss Sora. Please… have a seat. Have you been doing well?” she asked.

“Yes, a little… I’ve been doing well,” she replied.

“Is Miss Ha-Yan doing fine as well?” she asked.

Han Sora looked like she didn’t know. I unknowingly turned toward where Jung Ha-Yan was staying.

-…

I saw Jung Ha-Yan staring blankly at the wall.

“I’m sure she’s doing fine,” she answered.

- *Heuk, kgggh, kgh…*

‘No, I don’t think she’s doing fine… ’

CHAPTER 673
HAN SORA'S DEBUT (3)

Seeing Jung Ha-Yan made me feel nervous because she looked really unstable. Her anger level wasn't high, but I was sure Han Sora's transfer had affected her. It was ridiculous how she was staring blankly at the wall. She definitely had a hard time holding back her tears because she kept wiping her face.

"M-Miss Jung Ha-Yan, so..."

"I-I-I don't want to see you. I don't want to see you, Han Sora! I really... don't want to... go away. Just go away."

"Then... I'll head out. It won't take long. I have... things I need to take care of with the committee."

"It's because of you. It's all because of you! Don't you dare appear before me again!"

"I'll be back as fast as possible, so don't worry and take care of yourself."

It was a conversation that took place a few days ago. Jung Ha-Yan had to have been unaware, but Han Sora's presence had already become vital to her. They had lived together for a year, so it would have been weird if that weren't the case.

A sense of loss was what Jung Ha-Yan was scared of the most. She clearly remembered the days she had spent with her family and understood that loss very well.

Of course, her anger level didn't reach *extremely angry*, but she was starting to realize that the sense of emptiness in her heart was all because Han Sora was no longer by her side.

I remember her not caring much on the first day. She actually kept on mumbling to herself about how much she hated Han Sora, and she focused on her studies as if she wasn't going to see her ever again.

She studied so hard that she made somewhat of an achievement on her first day. The second day went the same as the first time. She had to have been angry at the fact that she lost to Cha Hee-Ra at the mock battle because she had made Han Sora take the blame and even cursed at her.

Obviously, the words she used were too cute to say that she was cursing at her, but she was so angry that she entered Han Sora's room and vented her anger using her cute hands.

On the third day, she looked like she was enjoying herself. However, it didn't count because she spent the entire day with me on that day, and she remained happy until the fifth day.

The problem started on the sixth day when I stopped contacting her. The aftermath that came without warning started tormenting her. She was still living a normal life, and she was still spending her personal time studying magic or doing any work related to it.

However, the problem was the time she spent outside of her studies.

'Uh… '

I still recall Jung Ha-Yan's expression as she stared blankly at the dining table. Mealtime wasn't the only problem. Han Sora was like Jung Ha-Yan's personal secretary. Actually, she was her nursery school teacher, and she would start thinking about Han Sora when it came to things that Han Sora used to do for her.

She even threw away the food that one of the continent's best chefs had made because it didn't taste as good as the food that Han Sora had been making for her, especially those dishes with a portrait of Lee Ki-Young.

'I guess it's understandable that she'd feel that way. Han Sora's drawing was pretty good.'

Jung Ha-Yan told the chefs to make meals according to her specifications, but the fifty-five lunch boxes with Lee Ki-Young's portrait had failed to surpass Han Sora's work.

It seemed Han Sora was truly talented. It was the same thing whenever Jung Ha-Yan was reading wedding magazines or making plans about her future with me. The

seventh day was the highlight.

“Once I get married to oppa, we’re going to go here for our honeymoon. I think this place is better than the other place. I heard this place is really p-pretty. I think oppa will like it, d-don’t you agree? W-W-What do you think about this place, Sora?”

Jung Ha-Yan ended up talking to herself like that.

She kept on looking around for Han Sora, and the emotions in her eyes told me that she was feeling kind of nervous.

She didn’t try to look or peep at the missing Han Sora, but she would keep on opening her Goddess’ Hand Mirror and stare blankly at the wall before writing messages along the lines of [I’m sorry, Sora].

However, she would erase those messages and write them again: erase and repeat.

The sight honestly broke my heart, and I was convinced that the reason she could still take it was that I had been visiting her frequently. Whenever I contacted her, she would look like she had completely forgotten about Han Sora.

Unfortunately, I couldn't really say for sure because her messages had been increasing in frequency and amount. It seemed that she was returning to her old self without her suppressor.

Eventually, I stopped replying to her, but it wasn't like I was actually free to keep on replying to her. I had work to do, and in the end, Jung Ha-Yan wasn't struggling because of me—she was struggling because Han Sora wasn't by her side.

Han Sora's absence was starting to feel heavy on Jung Ha-Yan's shoulders, which led to her sending a message that said [Sora, when are you coming back?]

Her pride didn't allow her to apologize, but there was no way Han Sora would reply to that kind of message. On that day, she threw her hand mirror away and cursed incessantly at Han Sora, but I also saw her crying and sobbing to herself.

She was struggling mentally. She went through so many emotions in one day, and she had been going from happy to sad more frequently. I knew she had some serious mental health issues, but it seemed to have gotten worse recently.

The interesting part was that Jung Ha-Yan wasn’t the only one reacting that way.

It was pretty funny, but Han Sora looked more anxious than Jung Ha-Yan.

Assuming that she was in a position where she had to head to a Semi-Mythic dungeon called the Lonely Archmage’s Abode, I would understand why she had been making that kind of face.

However, there seemed to be more behind that expression of hers.

Han Sora had also been acting strangely for a few days. Well, I wouldn't exactly say that her behavior was strange, as she simply sounded like she was a concerned friend. She simply asked what Jung Ha-Yan was doing, what her current condition was like, and if she was doing well.

However, I quickly realized that she wasn’t exactly enjoying her sudden freedom.

Of course, I didn't find it that strange.

It was like making someone hold a giant bomb and asking them if they would be more nervous holding the detonator in their hands or if they would be more nervous if the detonator weren't in their hands.

I was sure most people would say that they felt more nervous without the detonator in their hands.

Han Sora was in that situation.

She had successfully escaped Jung Ha-Yan's clutches, but she was still holding the bomb. Back then, she could still suppress her and feel some semblance of peace, but that was no longer the case. After all, they were no longer living together.

I would have been as nervous as Han Sora if it hadn't been for the Telescope. Anyone would be curious whether Jung Ha-Yan's hand was resting on the detonator or not. I wasn't sure if that was the reason, but Han Sora kept on asking about Jung Ha-Yan.

Well, it did make sense because of her role.

I saw Han Sora gulp through the Telescope, and she continued talking.

- You always seem so calm, Miss Sun Hee-Young. It’s nice to see you after such a long time… Yes, it's nice.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[She has always been that kind of person. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

- I feel… at ease because you've been taking care of me in so many ways… Has she been having a hard time? *Ah*, we were all supposed to get together… When should we do that? Should we all meet once Miss Jung Ha-Yan’s case has been handled?

‘She must've been really nervous.’

She was rambling on and on. To make matters worse, she was sweating.

- Has Miss Jung Ha-Yan… eaten today?

[I don’t think she ate today, but she eats her meals whenever she needs to eat. She looks kind of unstable, but she’s somehow managing to live her life. (0/1)]

- I’m also curious if she's been washing up…

[Ha-Yan isn’t a child. She can do that on her own. (0/1)]

- No, that’s not what I meant… Sometimes, whenever she’s focused, she tends not to care about the things around her. You told me that she’s been studying recently.

[She’s doing fine, so don’t worry. (0/1)]

- Still… I feel like I should know.

[Don't worry so much. I’m actually going to visit her now, so… if you want to check on her with your own eyes, you can come with me. (0/1)]

-…

-…

- T-That should be fine, right?

[It should be fine. You just need to follow my orders. (0/1)]

Han Sora looked doubtful if it was fine or if I would take responsibility for what I just told her.

'You won't get hurt. If anything, she'll just make pebbles rain down on you.'

Jung Ha-Yan wouldn't hurt Han Sora. Of course, I had no idea what would happen if Jung Ha-Yan went berserk, but Han Sora was already an integral part of Jung Ha-Yan's life. She considered Han Sora one of her own people.

Han Sora still looked nervous despite my explanation. As soon as she got off the griffon, she immediately started walking away. It was ridiculous how she kept pacing back and forth in front of the door.

Just as I thought about saying something to her, Han Sora knocked on the door.

- Miss… Jung Ha-Yan… I'm here.

-…

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan? I'm here.

-…

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan!

- A-Are you here, Sora?

- Yes, I'm here.

- W-W-Why did you come?

- There's something… I needed to… do.

- Come in.

Creaaak.

The sound of the door opening sounded creepy to me, but that was probably just me.

Han Sora looked scared as she walked past the door, and it was probably because she was worried about Jung Ha-Yan's condition.

I was also scared of how Jung Ha-Yan would react, but thankfully, she didn't show the worst possible reaction. If I were asked about how Jung Ha-Yan reacted, I'd say she seemed extremely relieved because she looked happy in my eyes.

Her pride was probably the reason she didn't immediately open the door.

'She's supposed to be angry on the outside.'

She had already decided to blame Han Sora, and she was also angry at the fact that Han Sora hadn't replied to her message. Jung Ha-Yan was probably thinking that Han Sora had to formally apologize and realize by herself just how important she was to her.

I couldn't help but wonder about just how her behavior was so markedly different whenever she was with others compared to whenever she was with me. Well, of course, I still believed that she would show a similar reaction.

Jung Ha-Yan had the upper hand in her relationship with Han Sora, and this sounded weird, but Han Sora was like the older sister or mom in their relationship. She was always by Jung Ha-Yan's side, and she was always ready to take care of her.

Han Sora started cleaning up the mess that Jung Ha-Yan had made as if she had long gotten used to it.

- H-Have you eaten?

- N-Not yet.

With that, Han Sora immediately started cooking. Jung Ha-Yan got up quietly from her bed as if nothing had happened and started pacing outside her room. She looked really relieved, and I could deduce what she was thinking, and it was either of these three…

'Everything's back to normal,' or *'It's finally over. Sora is back. I'll accept her as long as she apologizes,'* or *'I should forgive her for ignoring my message. She'll start staying*

here again from now on.'

- Y-You should eat.

-…

Jung Ha-Yan was so happy that it reflected on her demeanor as she sat down quietly.

She was probably telling herself to remain calm, but she was all smiles. She behaved the same when Han Sora finally served her food. There was so much food that the entire table was filled with dishes, and it felt like there was a banquet.

Jung Ha-Yan was really happy at the sight; she looked like someone who was finally about to taste their mother's cooking after a long while.

She seemed to be thinking that Han Sora was trying to apologize through her cooking, and she had already forgiven Han Sora.

Han Sora had made a mistake, but Jung Ha-Yan acknowledged that she deserved a second chance.

However, Jung Ha-Yan's expression changed drastically after hearing what Han Sora had to say.

- Miss Jung Ha-Yan, so…

-…

- I'm here to say goodbye… one last time.

Like always, I couldn't look straight at Jung Ha-Yan either.

CHAPTER 674
HAN SORA'S DEBUT (4)

Jung Ha-Yan's face suddenly turning serious was the first thing I noticed. Han Sora had to have thought that the word *last* was a bit too much because she hurriedly spoke up to explain, but Jung Ha-Yan wasn't willing to listen.

- I chose the… wrong words. To be exact, it's not the last… I just… have things I need to do. I'm currently doing some research with another team, so I need to focus on the research a bit more. I thought it would end soon, but that wasn't the case. I'll be living there for the time being…

-…

- So that's why I came to say… goodbye and to get my stuff as well.

-…

- I'm glad to see that you're doing well.

-…

The silence was enough to describe the atmosphere, and I couldn't help but try to read Jung Ha-Yan's reaction. I wasn't sure if her brain had stopped working or if it was something else, but Jung Ha-Yan was sitting with a blank stare as if she were a broken robot.

It would probably take some time before she could accept the reality. Eventually, she came back to her senses, but she started biting her lips while trembling.

- I don't like this. *Kgh…*

-…

- I really don't like this.

Jung Ha-Yan screamed.

- I really hate you, Han Sora!

-…

- I hate you! I really hate you! I told you not to come back! I told you that I-I-I didn't want to see you again. Why did you come back?! Leave! L-Leave! Leave right now!

- I'm sorr—

- Get out!

As Jung Ha-Yan screamed, she threw her food away as if she were throwing pebbles. She didn't destroy Lee Ki-Young's portrait on her plate, which made it seem as though she was just reacting instinctively. She also seemed skilled at throwing because the chicken leg drew a beautiful arc in the air as it flew toward Han Sora.

- I'm sorry.

- It was Park Mijin, right? I-I-It was her! T-Traitor! Traitor! You're a traitor! Sora is a traitor! *Kgh… kgh…*

- No, it's not like that… You see…

- Why did you come?! Why? Why are you here?! I hate you. You're… such an idiot, a dummy! It's all your fault! Everything! It's because of you that I lost. *Kgh…* You ignored my message. You didn't even visit me! I don't need you either. W-We're no longer friends. I don't need you either. I don't! I told you not to appear before me, so why are you here?! Why?! You stupid! Stupid!

'Oh man… '

The feelings of betrayal had to have overwhelmed Jung Ha-Yan because she yelled at Han Sora, even though Han Sora had never mentioned that she had decided to work under Park Mijin. However, it seemed that Jung Ha-Yan had to have caught on, as it was just too obvious.

Thankfully, Jung Ha-Yan knew exactly how things had turned out this way, so her deduction was pretty spot on. I thought perhaps it wouldn't be so bad to take this a

bit further or create more conflict. Of course, we would have to be cautious about it, but I believe it would be pretty effective.

I immediately created a quest, and when I sent it to Han Sora, she stared into space with a face asking if this was really okay.

[Creating an average-ranked Forced Quest.]

[Push her a little more. Just a little more. (0/1)]

[Delivering an average-ranked quest to Han Sora. The reward for clearing the quest has not been registered. Player Han Sora will not be able to receive a reward.]

- That's really not what happened… Please understand.

-…

-…

- O-Oppa.

-…

- Oppa told you to do that, right? *Kgh*, I'll put in a good word for you. You don't want to leave either, right? You don't like P-Park Mijin. You said *kgh*… she was strange. You said Park Mijin was suspicious. I-It's probably not fun studying with Park Mijin.

- It's nothing like that. Aside from everything else, I believe I really need it…

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Let's take it a bit further, but not be too harsh. Let's take a step forward. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

Han Sora's gaze looked uneasy, but she had to have realized that this was necessary because she started talking cautiously.

- I-I think you should understand me… as well.

- *Uh…*

- You have to understand my situation as well. I also… did my best… Please understand that, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I-If you… keep blaming me…

'You can do it, Sora. You can do it.'

- It's not like… I'm not sad at all about what happened, but it's not like I did something so horrible that I deserve this kind of treatment. I told you it was necessary. Why… Why do you only think about yourself, Miss Jung Ha-Yan?

Han Sora's voice was trembling, but she was on a roll.

She closed her eyes tight as she decided to speak her mind.

She seemed worried about getting assaulted, but nothing happened. Had she become even more confident than before? Perhaps she simply wanted her first debut to be a successful one? I had no idea why, but Han Sora opened her eyes and stared intently at Jung Ha-Yan.

'Shit, her acting… is amazing.'

Han Sora's acting was so much better than Ahn Ki-Mo's acting, and it was so perfect that I was at a loss for words. I was sure that it had to have been difficult for her to take the first step, but she had definitely realized that it wasn't that difficult of an endeavor after trying it once.

She bit her lips and told Jung Ha-Yan about the sadness she felt in the past.

Han Sora seemed like she was really into it. The way she looked at Jung Ha-Yan, her cadence, and everything was perfect. She could become the lead actress in just about any drama out there.

- You don't know… how hard I worked to make our meals… I've never heard you say thank you to me… A-And if you keep blaming me, I'll be sad as well. I'm human, too. A human. I'm human…

- *Uh… uh…*

- If you keep telling me that you hate me… If you keep saying that, then fine. I hate

you, too. I hate you.

- *Huh?*

- You have to apologize, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. Of course, I'm at fault as well, but you have to apologize. I did my best as well… I prepared the mock battle with you while using my personal time… How can you say all of it is my fault? How do you think I will feel if you tell the sub guild master that it's all my fault? Have you ever thought about my feelings?

Wait, I think she should stop now…

- You're really arrogant. Am I your chef? Am I?! You won't even let me touch the lunch box! I have feelings, too! Do you know how much it hurts every time you tell me that it doesn't taste good?!

- *Um…*

- I give you advice every day, but you only listen to whatever makes you happy! Whenever I tell you that the sub guild master went too far, you tell me not to talk badly about your oppa and that I know nothing about him! You didn't even compliment me when I made the scrapbook! You only do what you want to do! I drew comics for you, and I even made you a doll! You have so many things that you want, and I always get them for you! You've always been like this! You've never changed! *Haa… haa… haa…*

'I think it's best if you stop there.'

- *Uh, uh.* I-I'm… s-sor…

'Maybe not? Is she trying to apologize?'

The surprised Jung Ha-Yan looked like she was trying to apologize.

I was convinced that she either realized something after listening to Han Sora's rant or she had to have realized that Han Sora hated her. It was most likely the latter, but Jung Ha-Yan knew that something wasn't right.

I couldn't say that she was actually trying to apologize. It was more like Han Sora's outburst had overwhelmed her.

Obviously, it was too early for Han Sora to accept her apology.

[Park Mijin! Park Mijin! (0/1)]

- That's right. It's nice working under Miss Park Mijin! She compliments me every day and it's more fun studying with her. She's also a great teacher. Yeah! I like Miss Park Mijin more than you.

- I-It's your fault. It's your fault, Sora…

- Miss Park Mijin!

- It's all your fault! *Eek*… It's all your fault!

- So…

- *Eeek…* I don't need you. *Heuk*, I don't need you! *Kgh*, I don't need you, so get out! Traitor! You're a traitor! *Eek, kgh, eeek,* get out! Get ouuut! I don't need someone like you. I don't want to see you, so leave, you idiot!

A loud noise echoed when Jung Ha-Yan pushed Han Sora with her adorable hands.

Han Sora fell to the ground upon losing her balance, but Jung Ha-Yan didn't seem to care. She cast a spell, and Han Sora was flung outside along with her luggage.

Boom!

Han Sora had gotten kicked out of Jung Ha-Yan's home. Jung Ha-Yan was huffing and puffing, and she had to be really angry because she threw the rest of the food that Han Sora had made toward the door. However, she started crying afterward.

- *Heuuuuung…*

My heart broke upon seeing Jung Ha-Yan cry with her head leaning on the table.

She looked like she was crying because no one came to her grand birthday party. Of course, this kind of conflict needed to happen at least once to help Jung Ha-Yan grow her relationship with others and for the sake of her mental development as well.

She was sad right now, but she would become more mature once this incident was

water under the bridge. Obviously, this wouldn't help her overcome her wall, but it left me satisfied. An incident like this always had to take place before a tragedy.

- I really hate her. I really do. Traitor! I'm not going to talk to traitors anymore. *Heuk…*

'Yeah, hate her. Don't hate her too much, though. Just a little bit.'

- Park Mijin… I really hate Park Mijin. I really hate… *Heuk*, both Han Sora and Park Mijin. *Kgh…*

'That's right.'

- I'm going to kill her. Park Mijin… I have to kill P-Park Mijin. *Kgh*… I'm going to kill her.

'No… '

- I have to kill her. Let's kill her. Yeah, let's kill her. Where is she… I'm sure she's somewhere. Just you wait, Han Sora. E-Even if you come back after I kill her, I'm not going to forgive you. I'm not going to take you back even if you come back after I've killed Park Mijin. *Kgh, kgh…*

Jung Ha-Yan seemed like she was starting to get angry. I thought things were going to become a bit dangerous, but we were safe for now. Since she wasn't mumbling to herself, I was convinced that she would be able to withstand this conflict.

I lifted my Goddess' Hand Mirror and gave her a call when she seemed like she was starting to calm down. It was ridiculous how she ran as fast as possible toward her hand mirror to pick up the call.

"Ha-Yan," I called out.

- *Kgh…*

"What's wrong, Ha-Yan?" I asked.

- *Kgh… Heuuung…*

She immediately started crying upon hearing my voice.

I was sure she had been feeling as though she was in a corner.

- Sora… Sora… *Kgh… heuuung…* Sora, *kgh…*

“I’ll be right there, Ha-Yan,” I told her.

- *Heuuuuuung…* Oppa… She…

I became a shoulder to cry on. We were just talking through a call, so I couldn't quite hear what Jung Ha-Yan was saying. I only managed to pick up a few keywords, such as Sora, traitor, and kill. Of course, she explained her side as well, but it was honestly difficult to understand what she was trying to say amidst her sobs.

If I hadn't seen what had transpired through my Telescope, I would have had no idea what was going on.

- *Heuuuuung…*

‘Great job.’

It was admirable how Jung Ha-Yan was crying over the phone because of what someone else had done to her. I couldn't help but think if she was just taking advantage of this situation to keep me on the phone, but I was actually happy about this entire situation because I wanted Jung Ha-Yan to realize something.

Once I stepped foot onto the lonely archmage’s residence, Jung Ha-Yan hugged me tight. Her face was covered in tears and snot. After seeing the place with my own eyes, I realized that it was more horrible than what I saw through my Telescope.

“*Heuuung*, so… so…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

I didn’t know what to say to comfort her, but I decided to say something.

“It's Sora's fault.”

Han Sora was the one at fault here.

CHAPTER 675
HAN SORA'S DEBUT (5)

I felt kind of bad for Han Sora, but it was her fault. Empathizing with Jung Ha-Yan's anger was the right thing to do right now. If she were someone else, I would've scolded them, but I wasn't scummy enough to take Han Sora's side.

Anyway, the honorary cardinal was officially Jung Ha-Yan's fiance, so I couldn't just blame her because true spouses were supposed to support each other no matter what.

Even if she had done something wrong, I needed to understand and empathize with her.

No matter how many times I thought about it, it was obviously Jung Ha-Yan's fault, but taking her side right now was the right decision.

"It sounds like it's Miss Sora's fault," I said.

What kind of surprised me was that Jung Ha-Yan didn't immediately nod. She looked as if this wasn't what she wanted, but of course, she still wanted to hear sweet words.

I moved closer to her quietly, and she nodded at my words.

There were a few setbacks, but when I continued blaming Han Sora, she started thinking that it was indeed Han Sora's fault. In the end, she cried again and started talking about all the things that made her sad.

"I-I-I lost because of Sora. *Kgh…* What happened was…"

From giving an excuse as to why she lost to Cha Hee-Ra…

"W-Without saying anything, she suddenly…"

To how Han Sora left home without saying a word…

"*Heuung… kgh…*"

Then, she started talking about how Han Sora had ignored her message and how she got angry with her and yelled at her.

She couldn't even speak properly when she started talking about how Han Sora had betrayed her and had gone to Park Mijin.

She definitely felt wronged because she kept talking about the same thing.

She barely managed to calm down after repeating her words about nine times,

"I really hate… *kgh…* Sora. I-I'm never going to see her again," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

'You're going to see her again in the end.'

"I'm sure she'll come to apologize if you give her some time," I told her.

"*Kgh… kgh…*"

"I'm sure she thinks she's at fault, and of course, you need to apologize as well. It sounded like Miss Sora was sad as well. If you apologize to her first, I'm sure Miss Sora will apologize as well," I suggested.

"…"

I was suggesting that she should apologize. I wasn't ordering her to do it, but Jung Ha-Yan seemed like she already made up her mind.

"I-I'm never going to forgive her until she apologizes first. *Heuk*, I'm never going to forgive her," she said.

'Yeah, that's a good attitude, Ha-Yan.'

I was worried that she was going to run out to apologize to Han Sora, but she was being stubborn. Han Sora's last remark, where she had compared her to Park Mijin, had to have pierced her heart like a dagger.

'Han Sora was at fault as well. How could she say something like that?'

Han Sora shouldn't have said that, considering that Jung Ha-Yan felt inferior to Park Mijin. Of course, Jung Ha-Yan had provided a reason, but Han Sora's every word was like a stab to her delicate heart. It was no wonder she was so upset.

'She was pretty harsh.'

However, I thought it would be good to give her a reason as to why I was shielding her because that was what mediators would do, and I wasn't the type of person to encourage conflict.

"She shouldn't have said that… I'm sure Miss Sora was angry at the time and said things she didn't mean. I'm sure she'll come and apologize. When that time comes, I think it's best if you apologize to her as well," I suggested.

Obviously, the chances of Han Sora coming here and apologizing first were zero, but Jung Ha-Yan seemed certain that Han Sora was going to come here and apologize first.

"I think it's best to go out today and get some fresh air," I told her.

"R-Really? What about my studies…" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"You probably won't be able to concentrate in this condition. Taking a break for a day should be fine. You need time to rest as well," I replied.

"I-I'm glad," she stuttered.

"You need a break so that you can work hard tomorrow, too," I added.

"Yes, you're right," she said.

She smiled, seemingly feeling better. For a moment, I doubted if this was really okay, but I was sure that even if she were to focus on today's training, she wouldn't experience much growth.

Of course, she would definitely grow slightly if she were to desperately study for the sake of killing Park Mijin, but Jung Ha-Yan didn't need a slight growth.

'She needs to overcome the wall.'

Jung Ha-Yan was currently standing in front of a massive wall. She could take a step forward, sure, but it would be to the side rather than beyond the wall. She needed an opportunity to grow, and Cha Hee-Ra had already shown me that it was possible.

Right now, Jung Ha-Yan didn't need to study. She needed an opportunity—an opportunity to overcome that wall.

'No need to feel nervous. 16 days should be enough. It's better to take your time. Rather than winging it, it's way better to gradually build up to it. Let's not be hasty.'

Her guilty conscience and regret would keep on gnawing at her as the conflict grew.

I grabbed Jung Ha-Yan's hand, and the air around us changed. It had been quite a while since we had gone on a date, after all. Jung Ha-Yan seemed to have forgotten Han Sora. She looked like she had become more confident, and I could read her thoughts.

'Yeah, I don't need her. I don't need Sora,' or 'I won't contact her again until she apologizes first. Let's see who's going to suffer a bigger loss by then.'

Of course, it could also be along the lines of—*Have a good life with Park Mijin. I don't need you anyway. I don't care about you anymore.*

Jung Ha-Yan seemed to be really thinking that she could get through it just fine without Han Sora. If I hadn't come here, I was sure she would have locked herself up, but right now, she didn't seem to care about Han Sora because she was having too much fun.

Just then, Jung Ha-Yan's expression changed, and she started muttering to herself while holding my hand. First of all, this wasn't because of Han Sora. To be exact, she had noticed something different in me.

She felt suspicious, and she gripped my hand tighter while tilting her head to the side.

'I'm sure she noticed something strange.'

She hadn't noticed it until she could finally relax. She kept wiggling my fingers, and she looked like she was checking my pulse. She tilted her head, and it became obvious that she was starting to become suspicious of the strange energy in my body.

‘She’s definitely skilled.’

Jung Ha-Yan didn't have Mind’s Eye, after all.

I expected it, but I didn’t think she’d notice so quickly.

The energy was so faint to the point that I was actually worried about Jung Ha-Yan not noticing it. The energy wasn't similar to Sun Hee-Young's buffs or debuffs, even though it had come from her. However, I used alchemy to change its nature a few times.

Jung Ha-Yan was supposed to have noticed it earlier, but the Han Sora incident had to have affected her a lot because it took her a while to notice the change. Of course, it could also be said that Jung Ha-Yan was just too happy to notice it. Still, the change was supposed to be obvious because it was like I had changed my hairstyle.

“O-O-Oppa,” Jung Ha-Yan called out.

“Yeah?”

“Have you been… feeling well these days?” she asked.

“Yeah, I’m fine. Actually, I think I’m gradually getting healthier. Why?” I asked.

“Well, it’s just… S-Something seems strange,” she answered.

“What is?” I questioned.

“It’s kind of strange…” she mumbled.

“What is?” I asked.

“I-I can’t really describe what it is… Something is… strange. It’s kind of strange…” she repeated.

“…”

“C-Can I… check real quick?” she asked.

I nodded quietly, and Jung Ha-Yan examined me. I was worried about her noticing the

fact that the energy had come from Sun Hee-Young, but I was confident that she wouldn't notice that.

The faint energy flowing through my body right now didn't have an effect—it was neither a buff nor a debuff. It was just a mote of mana.

Obviously, Jung Ha-Yan wouldn't think that way.

Normally, she would've just ignored it and remained confident of her diagnosis, but Jung Ha-Yan wasn't that confident anymore, knowing the existence of a genius mage who was allegedly better than her. To make matters worse, that mage was close to me.

The crucial part here was to make Jung Ha-Yan delusional, nothing more, nothing less.

I had to make her think that the mysterious mage Park Mijin was influencing me with her spell. I wanted to make Jung Ha-Yan become more self-conscious of Park Mijin's existence and start asking questions about her.

Of course, she wouldn't find anything about Park Mijin because she didn't exist. If I were asked to describe this part of the plan, it would be giving Jung Ha-Yan the mystery of the century as well as making her regret her recent actions.

"What's wrong…" I asked.

"I-I can't really describe it because I'm not certain," Jung Ha-Yan replied.

"You can tell me," I said.

"I-I-I think there's a strange energy in your body. H-Has there been any spells…" she asked.

"Someone did cast a fatigue recovery spell on me," I answered. "…"

Jung Ha-Yan mumbled as soon as she heard my answer.

She was questioning if the spell was truly a fatigue recovery spell. The spell used to materialize the mote of mana inside of me wasn't that complicated, but Jung Ha-Yan was confused because she was treating it as if it were a fatigue recovery spell.

Jung Ha-Yan seemed frustrated by the fact that she couldn't figure out what it was because I noticed her biting her lips. She also disliked the fact that another person's mana was inside of me because she immediately injected her mana into me.

'Shit, what's going on? But I don't feel anything.'

It was a completely different feeling from when Kim Hyun-Sung massaged me with his magic. If I didn't have Mind's Eye, I wouldn't have noticed her injecting her mana into me.

Soon, the vaccine she had injected into me started attacking the foreign mote of mana inside of me as if it were a virus. Soon, the mote of mana was annihilated. She did it so easily and so quickly that it felt a bit surreal.

"I-It's nothing. I-It was my mistake," Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

However, she still seemed suspicious of the energy.

'She's definitely thinking… '

She was probably recalling the things Han Sora had said to her and their conversation about how Park Mijin was suspicious. Of course, it was a baseless suspicion. First of all, she couldn't prove that the mote of mana just now belonged to Park Mijin. In addition, she also couldn't say that it was harmful to me.

Jung Ha-Yan was probably struggling with what to do because if she said something without solid evidence, she would end up being the strange one.

The only thing she could do right now was get rid of it, and she seemed to be feeling better upon doing that. However, she probably realized that she had noticed the same strange energy from Han Sora as well. She wasn't certain, but she believed that there was something strange inside her body as well.

It could truly be just the remnants of a fatigue recovery spell, but it could also be something else.

Jung Ha-Yan's eyes were shaking, and the way she bit her lips made it seem like she had made up her mind. I wasn't sure if my assumption was right, but I was certain that it was pretty close.

As expected, I heard her talking.

“I-I-I’m not going to care anymore. I really… don’t care about her…”

She only managed to say that because she still hadn't realized just how important Han Sora was to her, and I was sure that Jung Ha-Yan would regret this decision soon.

CHAPTER 676
DRAGON (1)

“It’s done.”

‘The set-up is done.’

The conflict was sown, and the plan was made. I also made sure to include things Jung Ha-Yan might regret so it could be said that everything was ready. The plan was made with all my heart and soul, so everything should go swimmingly once the plan was in motion.

Honestly, I could forcefully set the plan in motion, but I wanted to achieve the highest result possible, so I had to take a step back and let nature take its course.

From now on, I should let Jung Ha-Yan make her own move. It had been three days since then, and she still hadn't made any moves. However, I wasn't exactly nervous despite that.

‘I expected it, after all.’

I didn’t give her time to bite the bait.

She was with me over the past three days.

We weren’t together for the entire day, but she had been spending time with me whenever she was reminded of Han Sora. What we were doing here is not giving Jung Ha-Yan the time to think about her. I dedicated as much time as I had available so that Jung Ha-Yan wouldn’t feel lonely.

As expected, the Goddess’ Hand Mirror started ringing…

[Are you coming today as well, oppa?]

[You have to come. I’ll be studying hard.]

[When are you coming?]

[Are you on your way?]

Jung Ha-Yan's obsession with Han Sora and I had become even worse.

It was really exhausting trying to deal with her.

I grabbed my hand mirror and noticed the unread messages.

[Darling, do you have an extra Infinity Bag? If you do, bring one. I'll pay you.]

The message was from Cha Hee-Ra noona.

'I got this as a gift, so I wonder if it's even okay to give it to her.'

It was mine, so I didn't think that it would matter.

However, I felt uncomfortable at the idea of giving it away.

Wouldn't Doom Hyun-Sung show some kind of reaction once he noticed that a bag was missing from the shelves?

[Or tell Kim Hyun-Sung to stop bidding on the bags I'm bidding on. It's seriously annoying. Shit, that crazy bastard.]

'What the hell?'

I couldn't understand what Cha Hee-Ra was saying, but I quickly understood what she was talking about when I accessed Benigoa Net's official auction house.

[The Red Mercenary has bid on the Chanelia Hermes' Equipment Storage Bag (Legendary) for 330,000 Gold.]

[Kim Hyun-Sung has bid on the Chanelia Hermes' Equipment Storage Bag (Legendary Rank) for 350,000 Gold.]

[The Red Mercenary has bid on the Chanelia Hermes' Equipment Storage Bag (Legendary) for 430,000 Gold.]

[Kim Hyun-Sung has bid on the Chanelia Hermes' Equipment Storage Bag (Legendary) for 550,000 Gold.]

[The Red Mercenary has bid on the Chanelia Hermes' Equipment Storage Bag (Legendary) for 600,000 Gold.]

[Kim Hyun-Sung has bid on the Chanelia Hermes' Equipment Storage Bag (Legendary) for 800,000 Gold.]

'What the hell is he doing? Has he… not been training at all? And when did he learn to use the Benigoa Net's auction house? Wait, why did he use his real name as his ID?'

I was surprised. A few days ago, I remembered seeing him training like a madman using my Telescope, but it seemed that he could still find time to check on the auction house despite his busy schedule. I questioned if he was really okay, but…

'It's not bad since it's just a hobby.'

The fact that he had enough time to relieve his stress didn't seem like a bad thing since he had been really busy these days. The problem was that Cha Hee-Ra was getting stressed out, so I thought about letting her borrow a decent bag.

I scrolled down the unread messages and saw Kim Hyun-Sung's message.

[Mr. Ki-Young, I'm sorry for bothering you when you're so busy, but how are you doing? I'm getting worried because it seems like you've been working too hard lately. Of course, I understand that you're doing it for the continent, but I'm worried that you'll become exhausted even though the war has yet to start. Please be a bit more selfish. Anyway, a new line of bags popped up at the auction house. I hope the bags will give you some strength during these trying times.]

'…'

I had no idea how to reply. Honestly, I wanted the Equipment Storage Bag to go to Hee-Ra noona, but Cha Hee-Ra was bidding on the bags using her own money, unlike Kim Hyun-Sung, who had decisively used the guild's funds.

In other words, Kim Hyun-Sung was guaranteed to win any bidding wars.

[Oppa, look at the Benigoa Net auction house right now. Cha Hee-Ra is losing all of

her money. *Hehehe*]

Lee Ji-Hye sounded like she was enjoying it.

[Mr. Lee Ki-Young, have you taken care of the task you mentioned last time?]

This was from Sun Hee-Young.

[Does your head still hurt? I know it's a busy time for you, but please take care of your health. I'm worried that you might faint again. *Ah*, have you taken a look at the video I sent you last time? *Hehe.*]

This was from Jo Hye-Jin.

I also received messages from other people, but I just sent them a generic reply. It was kind of strange that I didn't receive any message from Park Deok-Gu, but he was probably busy with his tactical training.

I saw he changed his profile picture and wrote the famous line—Hard work pays off on the About section of his page, but I honestly wasn't expecting anything from him. His presence wasn't really that important because my plan didn't involve him charging toward the enemies, but I was sure that he would still be useful.

I got engrossed in reading the unread messages in my hand mirror to the extent that I actually forgot the passage of time.

'Where is she?'

I turned to find Jung Ha-Yan because I needed to kill a bit more time, but someone opened the door and entered.

"What kind of scummy thought are you having this time?" said Dialugia. It had been quite a while since I last saw her. She had to have come straight here after her long trip because she looked disheveled.

"Well, it's nothing you need to concern yourself with. I just have too many things to do. The world is about to end, and as the savior of the continent, I can't just stand by and watch. By the way, how are things?" I asked.

"…"

“Have you had any success? What I mean is…” I paused.

“…”

“Have you found other dragons?” I asked, feeling excited at the response.

‘A few dragons probably responded, right?’

Dragons could boost our firepower. Moreover, they were once the guardians of the continent, and they had always been a stickler for maintaining the balance. We didn't have enough time to create 666 angels, so I had no choice but to rely on them.

I had never heard of the dragons getting involved in wars, but I thought things would be different this time because Dialugia was here. After all, she could become the bridge between humanity and dragons.

‘I’m sure there are at least twenty of them. Right?’

She had been busy traveling the continent, so I was sure she had achieved some kind of result. However, the problem was that Dialugia’s face was starting to look gloomy

She started talking cautiously, “Most of them are either hidden or asleep…”

“So…” I said.

“I couldn’t meet many of them,” she continued.

“Haven't you been traveling after that incident broke out?” I asked.

“I did, and I’ve been looking for them, but…” she paused.

“How many replied?” I questioned.

“Only… t-three,” she stuttered.

“…”

“…”

“How is that even possible?” I asked.

“I really can't do anything. They're isolationists, and I even think it’s great that three of them bothered to reply,” she answered.

“We only have thirteen days left, and only three of them responded?” I complained.

“…”

“I thought they were the guardians of the continent?” I asked.

“That’s a thing of the past. They've spread out and are living their own lives. There are some hiding among the humans as well, so I believe at least three can help us,” she answered.

“Wait, didn’t you say only three responded? If you include the ones hiding among the humans, it should be more than three,” I pointed out.

“Among the three, only one dragon replied that they’ll join us…” she informed.

“…”

“…”

“Wow, this is really bad—really bad. We’re all living on the same continent, so how come they are so selfish… Did you lie to me when you said that dragons are the guardians of the continent? Did you guys just make that up to make yourselves look good? The continent is in danger, and yet they’re—how can they be so selfish? Does nothing else matter as long as they’re alive?” I complained.

“As I mentioned earlier, it’s a thing of the past. Humanity had made this bed, so they should lie in it. We should be thankful that many of the dragons are hostile toward our enemy. Just think of the scars that humanity has left on the continent and dragons throughout the continent's long history.

"We've suffered enough, and you need to consider our feelings, too. What I’m trying to say is that getting help from three dragons is actually really great,” Dialugia explained.

“Great? How can you say that when it's only three dragons?” I asked.

“At least they’ll fight with everything they have,” she said.

“I’m sure their sincerity will be a *huge* help to humanity. Wow, incredible! Dragons are such an amazing race! I wonder if there’s a race that’s just as selfish as them,” I said sarcastically.

“…”

“Did you even tell them the fact that they'll be in danger once the front line is pushed back? I’m telling you this because it seems like you don’t understand the severity of the situation, but those bastards don’t care whether you’re a human or a dragon. They might be friendly at first, but the outcome is always a tragedy. Our Smartie is living in this world, and do you really want her to live in a desolate ruin?" I asked.

“Dialuria is…”

“We need to do something. At this rate, things are going to become a catastrophe. I’m not asking the entire dragon race to come and help. I’m also not asking them to join the Continental Protection Management Committee… We belong to different races, yes, but I’m just asking them to protect the land we’re both living on.

"Only three? Are you kidding me? I think they're making fun of us,” I told her.

‘Shit, it’s not like I’m wrong.’

We had made an official request asking for their help, and I had even dispatched a special messenger, so I was shocked to hear that only three dragons had bothered to respond. To make things worse, we weren’t even sure if those three were going to help.

This was basically no different from them making fun of us. It was like sending a request to a nation we thought was our ally to dispatch some of their troops, and they only sent three hundred troops to assist us.

‘These bastards probably don’t understand it because they haven’t seen the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung's power.’

I wanted to drag the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung right now to the lair of those dragons and have him transform their lairs into a boundless sea of fire.

Dialugia seemed anxious and ashamed at my rant. The dragons had been calling themselves the guardians of the continent, but they had abandoned their mission

and had isolated themselves from the world for so long that they no longer cared about it.

Dialugia couldn't look straight at me because she had probably been thinking that I was a vicious and selfish human, yet her kin sounded more vicious and selfish than me.

'Shit, I was kind of relying on them for help.'

Jung Ha-Yan's awakening project was going along smoothly, but there was a part that frustrated me. Actually, it was more than frustration. We needed to increase our chances of victory even just a little, so the dragons had to join us.

I started tapping on my thigh.

"Do dragons no longer have any community?" I asked.

I don't think so. I heard meetings were taking place a long time ago, but that's not the case anymore," Dialugia answered.

"But you—"

"I'm just going by what I remember from when I was a child. Some of them have been keeping in touch with each other, but it only happens once every few hundred years. In addition, there's also an unknown number of sleeping dragons," she interrupted.

"Do dragons think of lives as if they were as cheap as chives? Isn't it normal to help those in need or lend a hand to those in danger? Let's just say that's what humans do, but you're a dragon, and they completely ignored your request. The dragon race doesn't make sense at all," I complained.

"It's not like that! Dragons think of life as precious as well. Obviously, I won't deny the fact that we're a race of very independent beings, but we still help those who aren't adults yet…"

"What?"

"…"

“Again,” I ordered.

“So… they help those who aren’t adults yet—”

“One more time,” I interrupted her.

“We help those who aren't adults…” she trailed off and turned pale. She looked as if she had made a mistake, and I couldn’t help but feel a bit disappointed when I saw her expression.

‘What in the world is she thinking?’

Was she worried that I was going to put our daughter in danger?

Yes, I was scum, but I wasn't *that* big of a scum.

CHAPTER 677
DRAGON (2)

“You don’t have to look so worried. Do you really think that I’ll send our Dialuria to battle?” I asked.

“…”

“No, don’t misunderstand. I never thought about doing that, so stop looking at me like that. You look like you’re really going to hit me,” I told her.

“The day you lay a hand… on our Luria is the day we die." Dialugia threatened.

“…”

“…”

‘Wow, this woman.’

“…”

‘Do you have that little trust in me?’

Dialugia looked so hostile that I couldn’t help but think that way for a moment. She kind of looked as if she had little trust in me, and I felt disappointed because I couldn't recall ever doing something so bad that I deserved this kind of treatment.

“Actually, you must completely exclude Luria from this plan of yours. That child is not ready to fight yet,” she said.

“Why are you assuming that I’m already thinking that way? Who said they were going to send Dialuria to the battlefield? I have never had a scummy thought like that, so don’t worry. There’s something I want her to do, but it’s far from being dangerous,” I told her.

“I don’t know what you’re trying to make her do, but I’ll reject all of it,” she said.

“It won’t affect her health, so stop overreacting. I honestly don’t want to do it either, but it needs to be done. If dragons are sensitive toward children, then I need to use her as much as I can. How did you convince the other dragons when you met them? Are you sure you mentioned Dialuria when you asked them for help?” I questioned.

“…”

“I knew it. I told you before that if this doesn’t work out, we’re all dead. We have to use whatever means necessary. We have to do whatever we can and place those arrogant dragons on the front line and use them as meat shields. I don’t want to harm our Smartie either. Basically, I’m saying that I don’t want her to get involved in this incident,” I continued.

“In that case… If you do that…”

“What else can I do? One mistake, and we’re all dead. I need to protect my family, too. Even if we take Noah’s Ark and run, there’s no guarantee that things will work out. We don’t know what will happen later. The best-case scenario is one where we don’t have to get on Noah's Ark. There’s really nothing wrong with it, so go and bring Dialuria here,” I instructed her.

“…”

“Hurry,” I urged.

“W-What are you trying to do?” she asked.

“What do you mean? I’m trying to film a public service announcement,” I replied.

“A public service announcement?” she questioned.

“It’s nothing you need to concern yourself over. There are other things we need to film, so hurry up and bring her here. We don’t have time,” I told her.

“But… why…”

“First, the monster wave at Castle Rock. When cowardly and lowly humans took Dialuria hostage, why did the other dragons not do anything about it? It was all because they weren’t aware of the situation, right? We need to film a decent commercial and broadcast it across the continent.

"If we put up Goddess' Mirrors across the sky, the dragons might realize the severity of the situation. *Ah*, while you're there, bring Max as well. I'm going to recruit children of other races as well. Just keep that in mind," I explained.

"Okay… I-I'll do that…" she stuttered.

I didn't think she understood what a public service announcement meant, but when I explained to her that it was an efficient way of delivering a message, she nodded at me.

Dialugia still looked suspicious, but I didn't really care. She was probably wondering if this public service announcement was really effective, and even though I wasn't sure if this was even going to work out…

'I'm sure it won't be completely ineffective.'

At least it'd be effective toward the dragons.

I could already tell it just by looking at the public service announcements on Earth. Of course, some people, such as Yul-Ha[1], will make fun of it and say that I was just trying to manipulate people using their emotions, but not everyone was like her.

There was a reason numerous non-profit organizations, volunteer groups, and charitable foundations around the world used a ton of money to broadcast ads. Once their ad had spread, its impact was beyond what capitalism could bring.

I was sure that the people of the continent and the other races, who still hadn't been polluted by the media, would be affected by the commercial. Of course, dragons, who had been living isolated lives, would receive the most impact.

'Ah, I think I might be kind of late—no, I might not make it at all.'

The plan was made at the last minute, so there was a small problem of me not being able to visit Jung Ha-Yan, but she probably wouldn't feel too lonely just because I was absent for one day.

I opened my hand mirror and saw a bunch of unread messages again.

[Shit. Kim Hyun-Sung, that crazy bastard. He's really out of his mind. This bastard needs to be investigated for embezzlement of guild public funds. How much is his

annual salary? How come he has so much money? The Continental Protection Management Committee will do it, right? Don't turn a blind eye just because you're part of the guild. Once this incident is over, I want you to do a proper investigation. I'm sure he's using the Blue Guild's funds.]

'Hee-Ra noona… lost.'

As expected, I noticed Kim Hyun-Sung's message.

[Regarding the new item I told you earlier, I managed to purchase it. I'm on my way to pick it up now. I didn't call because I'm sure you're busy, so I decided to leave another message. I hope my message will cheer you up.]

Kim Hyun-Sung was obviously trying to cheer me up, but I had a strong feeling that he was sending me messages just to cheer himself up.

He even sent me a picture.

It showed the Equipment Storage Bag sitting on the shelf, and it was so perfectly displayed that I didn't know how to reply upon seeing it.

I couldn't just say, *"Give that to Hee-Ra noona,"* or ask him, *"How much money did you spend on it?"*

Since he didn't mention the price, it had to have been more expensive than the Bag of Ascension he had bought for me last time.

I thought it would be rude not to reply, so I started typing on the hand mirror.

[Yeah, it cheers me up. I'm sure you're busy with your training, but… thank you.]

[I'm not that busy.]

He replied immediately, so he had to be on his break.

'Looks like he's waiting for my reply.'

[I'm glad to hear that. When are you available?]

[*Ah*, I was actually planning on gathering all the guild members and spending time

together. I'll try to schedule something, so I think it's best if we see everyone during the gathering. Thank you again, Mr. Hyun-Sung.]

[You don't have to thank me that much. I should be the one thanking you.]

[Well, I have to get back to work… ^^]

[I'll contact you again.]

[Okay.]

[Don't work too hard. I want you to be happy.]

[Okay.]

[I'll contact you again tomorrow.]

'I really have no use for the Equipment Storage Bag.'

"Maybe it'll be useful later."

The image of Cha Hee-Ra carrying around a sack filled my mind for a moment, but it wasn't a bag that increased one's combat power, so I didn't think it was necessary to give it to her.

I managed to handle the issue with Jung Ha-Yan by telling her that I might either be late today or I might visit her tomorrow. I checked in on her using the Telescope just in case, but other than feeling a bit down, she wasn't showing any other reaction, so I relaxed.

[Is Miss Jung Ha-Yan… feeling a bit better? Don't you think it would be better if I apologized to her?]

Han Sora was feeling anxious rather than Jung Ha-Yan.

Unfortunately, I needed to put this issue aside and resolve the issue before me.

[Miss Elena, are you available?]

[Yes. Do you need my help with something?]

Elena replied immediately. When I explained the situation to her, she replied with a simple *Understood*. Soon, I heard knocking on the door, so I assumed that she had to have been nearby.

“Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” Elena greeted.

“It’s been a while, Miss Elena,” I greeted back.

“It has.”

She certainly didn't look any different from before. The interesting part was that she kept looking at my eyes. It was weird, but I nodded in understanding when she explained why she kept on glancing at my eyes.

“I’m sure you're going to be surprised once I say this because it’s really been a while since we’ve seen each other, but…”

“Yes?”

“I can feel Goddess Elune in your eyes,” she continued.

“*Oh*, is that so?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“I was really worried because I haven’t felt Goddess Elune recently…” I confessed.

“Goddess Elune must’ve been watching over me through your eyes,” she said.

As expected from Elune's biggest believer, Elena's face was filled with affection and rather than someone who had been abandoned by Elune. My heart broke upon seeing her reaction, but I decided not to say anything to her right now.

“Really… I don’t…”

“Yes, I’m sure of it. I feel like Goddess Elune is watching over me more than ever. *Ah*, let’s move on… Have you been doing well? I couldn’t really contact you because I thought you would be really busy,” she said.

“I was kind of busy because my task is very important. I’m sorry that I haven't been

able to take care of you. I heard you've been training with Deok-Gu," I told her.

"*Ah*, you've heard!" she said excitedly.

"How's the training?" I asked.

"It was better than I thought. Honestly, there were some things I was worried about, but Mr. Deok-Gu is doing better than I thought, and the party members…" she paused.

"Yes?"

"The people he had recruited have complete faith in him," she continued.

"What?"

"You must've not heard about it. Mr. Deok-Gu has recruited sailors and mercenaries; they've been carrying out the training in units," she answered.

'What?'

"We're staying in a place that's a bit shabby to be called a base, but everyone has been doing pretty well with their training. It was awkward at first, but it seems everyone has already gotten used to each other's presence. Their mission is pretty important, so I'm sure they all feel a sense of responsibility. It's the same for me. I'm honestly kind of scared, but I feel good knowing that it's something that I can do," Elena explained.

"…"

"Obviously, it'd be great if we don't have to use Nice Boat," she added.

'What the heck? Why is he holding such a large training session?'

I definitely didn't tell him to create a separate party.

His driving force made me click my tongue. I felt anxious, but I thought that it wasn't so bad at all. It was actually a good thing. With the help of everyone else, Park Deok-Gu would be able to move comfortably in the midst of his party members.

“*Ah, and…”* she stopped.

“Yes?”

“I brought children from other races, as you asked. They’re resting in the living room. What kind of commercial are you going to broadcast? I couldn’t really understand it when you told me about it earlier,” she asked.

“It's going to be both insightful and helpful to everyone living on the continent. It has to be done since we don’t have much time left.

"You know there are people unlike Deok-Gu and the other hard-working people out there, and the goal of the video I'm about to make is to deliver a small message to them.

"I want to tell everyone that through the unification of all races on this land, we can create a world where our children can dream of a beautiful future. I want to tell them that we can live that kind of life,” I answered.

“*Ah…”*

‘See… you’re touched.’

I couldn’t help but look forward to the commercial affecting the other races as well as the dragons.

The atmosphere between Elena and I was heartwarming, and we stared at each other with smiles.

Boom!

A loud explosion echoed from the door, and I saw that it had been destroyed.

“*Hegh, hegh! Hegh, hegh, hegh!*”

“*Huh?*”

“*Hegh… Hegh, hegh! Kyaah! Kyaaah!*”

“Smartie?” I said.

A dragon slowly squeezed its way into the room.

'When did you get so big?'

She had gotten so big that it stupefied me.

---

1. Ki-Young's younger sister ☜

CHAPTER 678
DRAGON (3)

"*Kyah! Kyaaaah! Hegh, hegh, hegh!*"

Every time Smartie wagged her tail, I would hear a *boom, boom*, and *boom.*

The room seemed to be vibrating.

She wasn't this big the last time I saw her.

She was always in her human form, so the dragon form Smartie in my memories was only as big as a tiger. I was taken aback because Smartie had become as huge as an elephant, and she had to be really happy to see me because I could see tears in her eyes.

Smartie was trying hard to be in my arms, but she seemed like she couldn't even control her own body. How could I hug her with that in mind?

"Her true form must've popped up because she's really excited. Dialuria, you have to focus," Dialugia told her.

"*Hegh, hegh! Hegh! Kyaaaah! Hegh, hegh!*"

A tongue that was bigger than my entire body brushed on my face.

I couldn't help but think that I had gotten too negligent in bringing her, but…

'Most of the time we didn't meet was when she was in hibernation.'

"D-Dialuria?" Elena stuttered. She was shocked as well.

Soon, Dialuria turned into her human form and hugged me tightly.

"Daddy! Daddy!" Dialuria shouted.

“Oh my! Our Dialuria! Have you been doing well?” I asked.

“Yes, yes, yes!” she replied.

She clung onto me like a cicada clinging to a tree.

Afterward, Dialugia walked in slowly while holding Max’s hand.

“I’m sorry I didn’t go to see you as soon as you were out of hibernation, Luria,” I apologized.

“It’s okay. I understand. Mommy said you’re busy every day,” she said.

“Have you been getting along with your brother?” I asked.

“Yeah!”

I still recall how she body-slammed Max when they first met.

I was sure that Max would break a few ribs if she were to body-slam him like back then.

I turned to look at Max and found that he still looked normal. The sight was enough for me to confirm that Dialuria had to have stopped body-slamming Max. Her unique habit was still the same, but she seemed to have matured mentally. Back then, she didn't want to listen to her mother at all, but now, it was clear that she had already acknowledged her mother.

“You’re too heavy for your father,” Dialugia told her.

“…”

However, Dialuria didn’t listen to her this time.

I wanted to tell Dialugia that it was fine, but I was starting to run out of breath because Dialuria kept clinging to me. In the end, Dialugia got her off of me.

“'You've grown a lot, our Luria,” I commented.

“Yeah, but I was told that it would take a long time for me to get as big as Mommy. I

want to become like Mommy soon," Dialuria said.

"You'll soon be as big as your mommy. Have you been doing well? You just started school, right?" I asked.

Dialugia answered in her place, "She quickly caught up to the other students. Especially in P.E. and subjects like Basic Combat…"

'She's a dragon… Isn't that a given?'

Dialuria probably wasn't as skilled as a high-ranking adventurer, but when it came to combat knowledge, she was probably more knowledgeable than the average high-ranking adventurer out there. I was sure that Smartie was stronger than the children in her class and even the teachers teaching the class. Still, it was amusing to see Dialugia being so proud of her.

"She's also really smart," Dialugia added.

'Well, obviously. She is a dragon.'

"Of course, Max is smarter," she added.

'Still, it doesn't seem like she's treating him differently.'

There was affection in her eyes when she looked at Max, and it was the same for Max's gaze toward Dialugia. I knew this was going to happen. Dialuria was related to her by blood, but she was too unruly, unlike the epitome of an obedient child, Max. I was sure that he had never disappointed Dialugia. In fact, I was certain that he had comforted and supported the stressed Dialugia.

"What should I do now, Dad?" Dialuria asked.

"Hearing you say that is making me feel bad. It's like I only call for you when I need you…" I told her.

"You don't have to feel so bad because I have an idea as to what's going on. I know what kind of situation the continent is in and how important you are," she said.

'You've grown a lot, Smartie. Really.'

Dialugia's expression changed subtly, and we definitely reached the same conclusion. Honestly, I was planning on writing out a script and acting it out, but I decided to change my mind.

“I called you here because I wanted to see how our Dialuria was doing. How about we go outside for now? You too, Max,” I suggested.

I signaled to Elena, and she nodded at me.

“What are you thinking about doing?” Dialugia asked.

“What do you mean? I’m going to record the kids running around,” I answered.

“…”

“Did you think I was going to ask you to turn into the Plague Dragon?” I asked.

Dialugia definitely thought that way. She seemed disappointed by the fact that I wasn't going to give her a role this time, even though she was an experienced actor. However, she didn’t seem *that* sad.

Anyway, it had been quite a while since we spent time like this.

We added a few children from other races, but this was actually better for Smartie. It wasn't like she was already mature just because she was a dragon. Her mind had grown pretty quickly, but she still looked like a child.

I sat down with Dialugia, and I saw Elena introducing the children to Dialugia. Obviously, the elf and dwarf looked pretty nervous. The Dwarf child looked pale, while the children of the other minor races weren’t all that different from each other. Fear and awkwardness filled their faces, and Dialuria actually looked uninterested in them.

I figured Dialuria wanted to spend time with me instead of these children because she kept on glancing at me. I waved at her from afar, and she nodded with a relieved expression.

‘Not bad. It’s honestly a nice sight.’

I stared at the children and drew the image I wanted everyone to see in my head.

The children from other races awkwardly greeted each other, and I was sure that everyone's heart would feel warm upon seeing them get closer and closer to each other for the duration of the ad.

As expected, the awkward atmosphere was slowly vanishing. Of course, they were still instinctively afraid of Dialuria, but the innocent children slowly united and started playing around.

Smartie looked at them as if they were being childish or as if they were members of an inferior race. However, she looked like she was enjoying herself when they finally started playing.

Max wasn't an exception. Max had a penchant for showing everyone his mature side, but he showed me a new side of himself as he played with the other children. Their laughter filled my heart with warmth, and I actually had fun watching them play.

“It looks like Dialuria and Max are getting along with the other children, even though they just met. This is a precious moment.” Dialugia’s one-line comment wasn’t bad, and she even looked touched.

“So, this is…” Elena muttered.

“Yes?”

“So, this is the world that you want to see,” she continued.

I nodded at Elena’s comment.

“So this is the world that you want… Mr. Lee Ki-Young,” she repeated.

“…”

“There are still many elves who don’t trust humans. They have thoughts of moving forward and uniting for the continent's sake, but the wounds of the past and the time spent in wars won’t disappear completely,” she explained.

“I know,” I commented.

“Many have voiced their opinions about whether humans and other races can live harmoniously… and there are those who are still suspicious of the humans,” she

continued.

“I understand that feeling as well,” I said.

“I’m embarrassed to say this, but I feel the same way. Of course, I know that you and the members of the Blue Guild are all good people, and I realized that there are virtuous people out there, but there are still many whose souls are tainted.

"Still, I feel I can fly and do anything just by looking at them,” she added.

“…”

“I’m sure everyone will eventually know what you want to protect and the future you want everyone to see,” she said.

“…”

Dialugia's gaze toward me had changed subtly. She had been thinking of me as scum, but it seemed that the sight of playing children was enough to purify Dialugia's tainted heart.

It was true; there wasn't anything more heartwarming than this sight.

I was extremely happy to see the children run around while laughing. I was sure that any scum out there would regain their innocence at the sight.

Anyway, our Smartie showed her dragon form to the children, and I honestly wanted her to play in that form more than her human form.

‘You need to show your true self to your friends.’

The shocked kids became wary of her again, and some of them started crying.

However, they eventually got used to her dragon form, and they started jumping onto her back and playing with her tail. I even chuckled when I saw some of them using her tail as a slide. The Dwarf child looked too scared to ride the slide because they stayed close to her feet, but the sight was enough to prove that the Dwarf child was no longer wary of Smartie.

“The children must be hungry. I’ll go prepare something,” Dialugia offered.

“I’ll go with you, Miss Dialugia,” Elena said.

“I’ll go as well,” I said.

“No, you should be watching the kids,” Dialugia said.

I honestly didn’t want to move, so I was happy that she said that.

‘What's up with that affectionate look, Dialugia?’

She had just shown me the warmest expression I had ever seen on her face since our relationship started. I was sure she thought that this sight wasn't so bad, and it was all thanks to Elena's remark earlier.

Dialugia was happy to see a sample of the world Smartie should live in. Honestly, I thought the same thing. If children had to grow up in a certain environment, I’d prefer it to be this kind, and I was sure everyone else would agree with me.

The dragons would agree as well because they weren’t all that different from the elves.

Dragons were the guardians of the continent, and they had been helping humanity since time immemorial. Unfortunately, humanity returned their kindness with malice and started hunting their kind.

Humanity had immensely disappointed the dragons. Just like how humanity was the cancer of Earth, I was sure the dragons thought that the humans of the continent were cancerous tumors of the continent.

I really hoped that the dragons, who firmly believed that humans would never change and that we would never be able to live in harmony, would see this sight. I wanted them to see this sight because this was the truth.

The children played for a while until they got exhausted. Max looked like he had the most fun out of everyone because he was covered in dirt.

Meanwhile, Dialuria transformed back to her human form and ran toward me. There was probably something she wanted to tell me; she probably wanted to introduce me to her friend or something along those lines.

I wasn't sure if it was because the child-like innocence within me had been stirred, but a radiant light burst out of me.

I was desperately trying to hold them back, but perhaps the sight of the smiling and laughing children filled my heart with so much warmth that the wings rebelled against me and spread wide open.

I swear to the heavens that I wasn't aiming for a heartwarming scene here—wait, I kind of wanted a heartwarming scene, but I would be a piece of shit if I were to admit that here.

I decided to pretend that the ten radiant wings had popped up because my heart of light had failed to withstand the children's cuteness.

"*Wooooooooow!*"

"*Woah*…"

"Daddy! Daddy… they're so pretty. They're really pretty… daddy," Dialuria complimented.

"*Wooooooooooooo!*"

I spread my wings toward the future of the continent. The children had to have realized that they were covered in dirt because they seemed like they didn't want to touch my extremely clean wings, but I walked up to them and gave them a tight hug.

'For the future of the continent—I'm never going to give up.'

The dragon meat shields who had seen the ad started to gather one by one as if to fulfill my expectations.

CHAPTER 679
DRAGON (4)

The children were running around in a large clearing. An explanation was unnecessary because the children were having fun playing with each other, regardless of their race. I could hear their laughter, and their peals of laughter sounded genuine.

The mess they made as they ate together would make just about anyone out there scream—these children were just too cute and precious. The scene would convince everyone that we should live on this kind of continent.

The scene was telling everyone that they deserved to live on this kind of continent, and that this kind of future was worth fighting for. The overall message of the ad was something along the lines of…

- Only we can protect the continent where our children will live with peace of mind.

The camera zoomed in on Dialuria’s face, but the camera couldn't completely capture Dialuria's innocence.

Honestly, the children didn’t look clean, and we also didn't put any makeup on them.

However, the children had the kind of look that would invoke a child-like joy in just about anyone. We had to go to war to protect the smiles of these children, and we had to do it because it was the right thing to do—this was the message I wanted the ad to convey.

- We can protect the continent so long as we unite. The gathering of tiny candles can become a large conflagration strong enough to vanquish the darkness.

Many different scenes were displayed one after another at breakneck speed, but the highlight was Light Ki-Young hugging the children with his wings of radiant light spread wide open.

I was sure that the scene revealing the expressions of Dialuria, Max, and the children

whose names I had already forgotten while they were being hugged by the wings of light would be the most effective in the entire commercial.

- Harmony, love, and peace are values we must uphold. The children need your strength. Please lend your strength to the Continental Protection Management Committee. Lend us your hand so that we can take a step forward toward a new future.

- The Continental Protection Management Committee.

The scene faded to black and to the Committee's logo. It was made at the last minute, so I was worried if it would actually be effective, but I actually liked this kind of goofiness because it looked really natural rather than being staged.

Dialugia muttered, “I think it's going to be really… effective.”

“Of course, it’s going to be effective. The dragons still prioritize protecting young dragons. I know that it'll work,” I said.

"I'm not actually sure about that, so I was worried…” she confessed.

“It is a common value throughout the various races across the world. Is there anyone in the world who dislikes innocent children? I'm sure even those who have chosen to go child-free for some unknown reason will be touched by this commercial. Look at our Dialuria’s face—look at how innocent she looks! What do you think the dragons will think once they see her?” I asked.

“…”

“They’ll probably think that the world has changed because the image of other races and dragons getting along is a rare sight. There will be a few supremacists among them, but they’ll also end up nodding. I’m sure those dragons had come out to see if the world has truly changed and if it is really time to live together in harmony.

"I mean, it's such an unbelievable sight, right?” I said.

“I see…” she muttered.

“I’m sure our visitors were touched by the commercial, and they must have decided to come out and appear in the world after such a long time because they're curious if

it's the truth. Of course, I'm sure our Smartie's cuteness and innocence had contributed the most in urging them to come out of their lairs," I told her.

"But…"

"Yes?"

"I can't deny the fact that… things went well, but… something feels off. For some reason, I feel like we used the innocence of those children…" she mumbled.

"…"

"…"

"Do you really think that you'll be able to protect the continent with that kind of mindset? Look at Smartie's face and think again. All of this is for her," I said.

"I know that, but—"

"Dialuria is in her room, right?" I asked, interrupting her.

"Yes…"

"Let's go. We can't keep the guests waiting… If I had known that they would come this fast, I would have made some preparations. Who would have known that five dragons would come to us? Anyway, what did you say earlier?" I asked.

"I said that one of them can be called a dinosaur. I passed by them once when I was young, and I honestly think that they've already become one with nature," she replied.

"They must be strong," I commented.

"…"

A dragon capable of becoming one with nature had to be extremely powerful. I couldn't tell just how strong they were, but they were probably strong enough to protect an entire region by themselves. Naturally, they had to be strong enough to fight one of the Four Angels.

I smiled at the thought that we were about to obtain reliable allies. Still, I couldn't relax because there were still dragons who were suspicious of the ad, and there were also some dragons who had only visited us to confirm whether the sight was real or not.

In other words, this meeting had to end on a high note.

Dialugia and I would present ourselves as a happy couple, and I had to leave an impression that I was a trustworthy human because they still possessed a small amount of hostility toward humans.

We were just getting started, so it was too early for me to feel relieved.

“They’re waiting in the living room,” Dialugia informed.

“*Ah*, okay. Please go in first,” I told her.

Dialugia bowed and entered the living room.

I followed her and saw five figures sitting on the chairs.

There was one elderly woman, and the others looked like they were either around Dialugia’s age or were a bit older than her. The human form of dragons depended on their actual lifespan, so the grandma with white hair was probably the dinosaur who Dialugia had mentioned. I had no idea what type of dragon she was, but I had an idea about her color because of her golden eyes.

“Thank you for coming all this way, Honorable Guardians of the Continent,” I greeted.

“…”

“…”

There was a moment of silence, but they soon responded.

“We are no longer guardians of the continent. It's been a while since we heard that title, so don’t call us that anymore.”

“…”

"…"

"How could I not call you that? I am but a paltry human from another dimension in your eyes, but I know that your mothers, your mothers' mothers, and their mothers had devoted themselves to the continent.

"How can I ignore the hard work and sacrifice the dragons have made since time immemorial? Those hard work and sacrifices were the reasons I could walk on this land, after all," I said.

"…"

"It's a forgotten title, but all of you are worthy of the title—Guardians of the Continent," I continued.

"It's embarrassing," muttered the female dragon in her human form.

"…"

"It really is embarrassing…" she repeated.

The elderly woman with golden eyes clicked her tongue.

"Human chosen by the gods of the continent, you're embarrassing me…" she muttered.

"No need to feel embarrassed," I told her.

"What do you think, Xenogyria?" she asked.

"Marcelin, the holy human standing before us isn't lying. I don't feel even the slightest lie in his heart that's working for the light," Xenogyria replied.

'What the? They have a lie detector?'

I wanted to check by activating Mind's Eye, but I didn't want to give them a reason to nitpick. I stared in confusion at the dragon named Xenogyria, and they looked like they were feeling bad as they stared at me.

Meanwhile, Marcelin spoke loudly, seemingly in disbelief. "How can… that be? The

gods of the continent have chosen him, but he's still human. It can't be true. Xenogyria, even the so-called warriors have ultimately fallen victim to their own greed. There's no way a human like that would exis—"

The blue-haired Marcelin stopped talking as soon as our eyes met.

'I can throw away everything if it's for the continent and for everyone living on this land.'

"There's no way… a human… like that… exists…"

'What I want isn't power, honor, or anything material. I'm also not doing this to protect myself. I honestly don't know how I can do that, to begin with. I don't need anything. I just want to protect—I just want to protect this land out of my pure love for it. I am the incarnation of light itself.'

"There's no way…"

'Love, peace, harmony, and the future. That's all I want. I don't want anything else. It's true. I don't know about anything else, but those three are what I want.'

"It can't… be…"

"Looks like I was right, Marcelin. Don't you agree? There are things you'll notice on the outside without having to look into their hearts. That's what I felt. What do you think?" Xenogyria asked.

"I apologize," Marcelin said.

"This human is different. He genuinely wants to protect the continent. The title—Guardian—fits him more than us, who went into hiding. At first, I really couldn't understand why you accepted a human as your husband, but… it looks like you didn't make the wrong decision, Dialugia," she said.

"Thank you, Miss Xenogyria," Dialugia said.

"I can also feel that this human loves you a lot. You found a good partner. A very—very good partner," she added.

"…"

“First, I would like to apologize. I apologize for not trusting you and for making you take a useless test…” she said.

I couldn’t figure out what kind of test they were talking about, but the light within my heart had to be a cheat code that allowed me to pass any kind of test.

“However, please understand that it was necessary. We've been in such extreme pain for so long…” muttered Xenogyria.

“I don’t know exactly what’s going on, but you don’t have to apologize, Miss Xenogyria,” I told her.

‘I’m not sure what’s going on, but I’m thankful.’

“…”

“…”

There was a moment of silence, so I figured that she felt really bad.

I could tell that she was thinking about what she should say first.

This was a great situation for me because the other party owed me something.

As expected, Xenogyria continued the conversation. I was worried for a moment because I didn’t know what she was going to talk about, but what she said was kind of surprising.

“If you don’t mind, I’d like to hear stories of you two.”

“What kind of…”

“Like how you two met, how you two got into a relationship, and why Dialugia picked you as her partner. I want to hear it all,” she replied.

‘That’s random.’

Xenogyria was smiling gently, and she definitely gave off the vibe that she was an elder of the dragon race. She had to have remembered seeing Dialugia once when she was young because she was interested in Dialugia's story. She was like a

grandmother who wanted to hear her granddaughter's love story.

It was kind of embarrassing, but I had to say something because I had to leave a good impression.

"Honestly…"

"*Hm…"*

"To be honest, there was a time when the humans of a city called Castle Rock kidnapped Dialugia's daughter," I confessed.

It felt like everyone in the room froze up when I said that, but they started nodding upon hearing my story. I told them about how the Small Stone Guild had taken Dialuria hostage to threaten Dialugia. In the end, I saved Dialugia when she was on the verge of dying, and I started taking care of her.

Eventually, we got closer… It was honestly a silly story.

My face turned red when I recalled that incident because I had never imagined that I would end up becoming Dialuria's father. When I looked at Dialugia while continuing the story, she looked at me with a slightly awkward smile.

"I honestly never imagined that I'd end up becoming Dialuria's father. It just… happened," I told her.

"Looks like she caught on to your weakness, *haha*. You wanted this man. Am I wrong, Dialugia?" she asked.

"I'm… embarrassed…" Dialugia muttered.

"He was chosen as her partner after saving her, so the human who had received the blessings of the continent's gods may feel… kind of wronged with that remark, Xenogyria," Marcelin chimed in.

"Don't tell me that you didn't have the same thought as me, Marcelin?" asked Xenogyria.

"It's unfortunate for the innocent human, but I'm jealous of Dialugia," Marcelin said.

I was nervous at first, but the atmosphere of the room was brightening up. I could already see everyone standing united for the sake of a brighter future.

CHAPTER 680
DRAGON (5)

“I think we should stop now, Marcelin. Dialugia doesn’t look so good…” Xenogyria suggested.

“Please don’t take it too seriously, Miss Dialugia. If the day comes when I need to choose a partner, I was just thinking that it wouldn’t be a bad idea to choose someone like him,” Marcelin said.

“I-It’s fine, Marcelin,” Dialugia stuttered.

“…”

“…”

“Marcelin isn’t trying to take your partner from you, so you don’t need to look so worried, Dialugia,” Xenogyria reassured her.

They had to have been worried about Dialugia because she looked as if she was feeling uncomfortable.

‘I don’t think it’s because of what Marcelin said.’

The other dragons didn’t feel awkward upon seeing Dialugia’s reaction, but I felt awkward. She probably recalled the painful memories at the time since we were talking about *that* incident. I didn’t know exactly what she was thinking, but I was sure it was related to that traumatic incident.

I grabbed her hand, and I felt her figure slowly stopped quivering. Xenogyria nodded and smiled warmly. She probably caught on to what was happening.

The subject was immediately changed, and I realized that my assumption was correct. I thought her change in attitude was kind of sudden, but it didn’t feel awkward. In some ways, this was the event the others were looking forward to the most.

“We should’ve introduced ourselves with Dialuria… I’ll bring her right now, Miss Xenogyria.”

“That’s right. I completely forgot our goal for coming here. I can’t believe she’s a dragon that hasn’t reached ten years old yet…” Xenogyria commented.

“I’m kind of nervous,” Marcelin said.

“Me, too.”

“I’m looking forward to it.”

The room started becoming noisy. I thought at least two of them came to see Dialuria, but I noticed that all of them had come here for Dialuria.

‘They’re truly a unique race.’

I couldn’t really understand their thoughts as a human being.

Who would have known that they would like children so much when they were a race that didn't like having children to the point that only a few of them were remaining? It could be a behavior that was common among dragons, or it could also be a part of their culture. Of course, their way of thinking could be completely different from mine.

It didn’t really matter, but if I were to write a thesis about these dragons, I was convinced that it would sell really well.

The dragons were looking forward to seeing Dialuria, and it wasn't that difficult to deduce because they were talking about her. They were saying things like, *“The future of the race…” or “I can’t even remember the last time a dragon was born,”* while looking all excited.

Just then, Smartie entered the living room.

“Hello, I’m Dialuria,” she introduced herself. The way she bowed was completely different from her usual behavior.

‘What the? Why is she so well-behaved?’

Of course, she was normally well-behaved, but she had to have made up her mind to kick it up a notch. I had never really given her feedback, and I didn't coach her as well, but it seemed that she understood her position very well.

"*Oooh*."

"I'm Xenogyria. It's nice to meet you, Dialuria."

"Call me Auntie Marcelin."

"Nice to meet you, Dialuria."

"You're really small. You're only ten years old, so I can't believe that you can already transform into this form. You're a very intelligent child," Xenogyria commented.

"You're so cute," Marcelin said.

Marcelin looked like she was really holding back the urge to run to and hug Dialuria.

Hearing so many compliments caused Dialugia to smile with satisfaction.

Dialugia had been bragging about Smartie every day, so I was sure these compliments were music to her ears. Dialugia wanted to talk more about Smartie and in the end, she couldn't contain the urge and started talking.

"She has a good heart, and she adapts really well to any environment. She's at the top of her class, and even though she has just recently emerged from hibernation, she has already caught up to her classmates."

"Classmates?" Xenogyria asked.

"Yes. Dialuria spends time with humans and other races, Miss Xenogyria," she replied.

"So what we saw through the item called the Goddess' Mirror was true," she said.

"Yes, my partner actually recommended it…" Dialugia pointed out.

"Can I ask how you came up with that idea?" she asked.

“I didn’t have any specific reason. I just wanted her to get along with other children her age. I don’t know what all of you think, but… I believe that’s normal. I want them to learn how to get along with others and form a positive relationship with a variety of people,” I replied.

“How come?” she questioned.

“I thought those were important. Excuse me for saying this, but I believe those are things dragons really need,” I answered.

“Interesting. You may have been chosen by the goddess and have become a dragon’s partner, but I don't think you can talk about what we need.”

The one who had spoken just now with an aggressive tone of voice was a silver-haired dragon who had been pouting for quite a while now.

‘He's had that dissatisfied look since I entered the room. I knew he was going to react that way.’

If I had to describe the situation, it was as if he had found something to nitpick. He had to have been disgusted by the fact that a lowly human was trying to tell the dragons what they needed.

‘Ha… ’

It wasn't extreme, but it seemed like there was a racial supremacist among them.

He was only able to say those things because the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung hadn't cut off his wings and tail yet, but I just had to play along for the moment, so there was no need for violence.

“I’m sure it must be unpleasant. Dragons are the guardians of the continent, so it's understandable for you to think of humans and the other races as beings you need to protect rather than beings you should live together with. You will live a long life, and you are strong. If I hadn't become a dragon’s partner, I would’ve thought the same thing as all of you,” I explained.

“…”

“Just like the gods of the continent, I’m sure you thought that the dragons needed to

be idolized as well to be considered a worthy race," I continued.

"Is it wrong?" he questioned.

"I apologize, but yes," I replied.

The hot-headed bastard immediately stood up with a *thud*.

"Regardless of their responsibilities and abilities, I think dragons are a race that should live in harmony with the other races. You're a race that must live together, communicate, and live in harmony with others. I feel that you're a race that needs to live on the same level as the other races rather than being above them," I continued.

"You will have to take responsibility for your words, human," Caseliana threatened.

'I don't need to take responsibility. If you hit me, the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung will come running.'

"That's the reason I think the goddess created you that way," I added.

"What do you mean?" Xenogyria asked.

"It's not worth listening to this hypocrite, Miss Xenogyria," he said.

"I'm scared that I might be twisting the goddess' will, but I believe your ability exists so that you can choose a lifelong partner, share your heart and soul with that partner, and die together," I answered.

"So what does that mean?" she asked.

"Have you ever thought about how it's possible to choose a partner regardless of race?" I asked.

"…"

"I'm curious to know if you have ever questioned why you have the ability to live your whole life with someone you consider inferior," I clarified.

"Nonsense," he commented.

“Maybe what the goddess truly wants from all of you… is to live together with other races. Not standing above them, but together. At least, that’s what I think, and I want Dialuria to feel those emotions as well.

"I want her to experience everything the world has to offer for her, such as the variety of cultures and lifestyles on the continent. Of course, I also want her to get to know the people living on the continent with their own unique lifestyles,” I continued.

“How absurd,” he mumbled.

“Caseliana!” Xenogyria shouted.

“Miss Xenogyria… this human is being disrespectful to us,” he complained.

“That’s not true, Caseliana,” Xenogyria said.

“What…”

“This human is right. He’s right,” she told him.

Honestly, I wasn’t sure if I was right. I was just saying things that came to mind, but Xenogyria wouldn’t listen to the words of the others because she was already drunk on the light.

Actually, my words made sense to me as well, which was a plus.

Honestly, I wasn’t sure what the guy was thinking when he created the dragons on this continent, but it was all about perspective. Depending on the situation, one's perspective could change everything, so it was worth ruminating over.

“Is that what the goddess told you, Dialugia’s partner?” Xenogyria asked.

“It’s nothing like that,” I replied.

“Now I know why… our race failed,” she said.

“What do you mean, Miss Xenogyria?” I asked.

"Our race has a penchant for blaming others rather than thinking that we might be

the problem all along. I understand it now. Have any of you ever thought about why the goddess gave us the ability to choose partners regardless of race?

"I'm sure that none of you had ever pondered it. It seems that the decline of our race was inevitable. It is only natural for those unwilling to get along with everyone to get forgotten by everyone," Xenogyria explained.

"…"

"Our race declined not because of humanity's greed. It's simply because we have been living the wrong way. We've been thinking of them as lower than us, so we have been consistently declining their help, and we had always grown wary of them whenever one of them had gotten strong enough.

"We've been observing the other races for centuries, but we didn't learn even a single thing from the way they lived their lives," Xenogyria added.

"…"

"We've been blaming those inferior to us by saying that they're the reason behind all this. In the end, we've been doing nothing but hiding in our own spaces. What I'm trying to say is that we've abandoned our responsibilities without even trying to understand what had happened," she added.

"…"

"The ability we thought was useless is the light that'll show us the path our race has to take to move forward. We must get along with the other races and live with them. I believe the goddess has been wanting us to live that kind of life," said Xenogyria.

"…"

"She wanted us to live together with them rather than protecting them from above," she said.

"But…"

The atmosphere became serious.

The silver-haired dragon bit his lips as if he had no choice but to acknowledge her

words. I was worried about Dialuria because she was in an awkward position in the serious atmosphere.

I was sure that she was really shocked because we suddenly started talking about strange things. As expected, the sudden change in the situation had to have affected her because she immediately started talking.

“I like my friends as well…” said Dialuria.

“Dialuria,” I mumbled.

“I like to be with them, and I'm having lots of fun with them. Of course, there are times when we have different opinions, but I still like my friends. I like living with the humans, talking to the elf unnies, and my little brother. I also like this continent,” she continued.

The child’s innocent words were getting carved into our minds.

“I want to live this kind of life. Like my dad said, I want to grow up with others,” she said.

“Everyone will die before you, Dialuria. Your friends will not understand you, too.” Caseliana pointed out.

‘This bastard should watch what he says.’

However, Caseliana's words didn’t affect Dialuria.

“I think that's the burden that we have to endure in exchange for the power that we possess, Mr. Caseliana. Our race's soul is also sturdy enough to withstand sadness," said Dialuria.

‘Wow! That was a good comeback. Our daughter is such a good speaker.’

“I know I’m shameless, but I have a request. Please join my mother and father for the upcoming apocalypse,” she requested and even bowed.

I was actually worried about how I should bring that up, but she took care of that problem for me. Her short speech made the room so quiet that one could hear a pin drop. Everyone was at a loss for words, but Xenogyria patted Dialuria’s head quietly

and grabbed her head before walking away.

I was baffled at the sudden turn of events, but I started following them.

We soon found ourselves at a large clearing, and Xenogyria's figure shone brightly as she transformed into a dragon. She was twice as big as Dialugia, and I wasn't sure if old-fashioned was the right word to describe her, but Xenogyria's appearance reminded me of a well-made statue.

Xenogyria brought her head back and…

"*Roaaaaaaaaaaaaaaar!!*" she roared. Soon, I heard roars all over the continent.

- *Gwaaaaaaaaaaar!!*

- *Roaaaaaaaaaaar!!!*

- *Gwaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaar!!*

I wasn't sure what was going on, but I was certain it was something positive because Smartie was all smiles. For some reason, however, I felt like her smile was rather wicked rather than innocent.

'Our daughter… is great, but… '

She wasn't happy that we had secured our meat shields, right?

'Right?'

I believe in you, my daughter…

CHAPTER 681
GET READY (1)

I could still remember the shadows that blotted out the sun at the time. I wasn't exactly sure just how influential Xenogyria was, and I also had no idea what her roar meant, but one thing was for sure—the dragons had decided to take the situation seriously.

There was a high chance I was right, and I became sure of that when I saw the look of dissatisfaction on the silver-haired dragon's villainous face.

"It'll probably be a long meeting, but… I'll do my best to bring good news. How long has it been since our lord died… I'm just thankful that you suggested a new direction to us."

I was sure she was being sincere.

'She'll bring good news, right? She has to bring me good news.'

I started tapping on my thighs while thinking about the little time we had left.

Lee Ji-Hye squinted and started talking. We were keeping contact through our hand mirrors, but it had been quite a while since we last saw each other, and she looked even more tired than usual.

"It's already been a week."

"You're right," I said.

"So…" she paused.

"…"

"You're certain that the strong and delicious dragon meat shields are going to join us, right? I think that'll increase our chances of winning by just a little bit…" she continued.

“It hasn’t been confirmed yet. However, the meeting seems to be going well according to Dialugia's words. However, there’s one dragon that might cause a commotion, and it’s been bothering me,” I answered.

“Are you going to interfere?” she asked.

“I don’t have time to interfere. I just have to pray that Dialugia will do well,” I replied.

“You’re not thinking about just standing by and watching, right? Regarding that silver-haired dragon. Why not use this chance and turn them into a dragon who sold their soul to the demons and get rid of them? It doesn't sound like a bad idea.

"It won't be a surprise if there's a dragon out there who has been secretly communicating with the demons. I'm sure it's going to be otherwise, but it's better to be safe than sorry. You can also make equipment using dragon bones and hearts, so it'll be like killing two birds with one stone," she suggested.

“I would if it could be done in one day, but it takes time. We only have seven days left, so I don’t have time to worry about that as well. It’s only possible if the other dragons listen to me.

"The Dragon Lord’s substitute trusts me completely, but I can’t say the same about the remaining dragons since every race has their own laws and culture. Just finding that out will take time. If I go in and they end up going into a state of lull, we’ll just lose the meat shields we barely managed to obtain,” I explained.

“That makes sense,” she commented.

“If we want to do something, it’s best to do it during the war. If they are useful, we should use them. Otherwise, we can just get rid of them using the same method we used at Castle Rock. We can just build a statue of them later and call it an honorable death,” I continued.

“You’re really cruel,” she said.

‘I really don’t want to hear that from you.’

“So what are our chances?” she asked.

It was hard to tell because I still hadn't measured it accurately, but it was definitely

higher than before. Jung Ha-Yan was still trying, but I wanted to give bonus points to Cha Hee-Ra for overcoming her wall.

If the dragons joined our cause, our chances should increase by ten percent. In addition, many minor issues were resolved, and mankind was prepared to fight. I managed to place the troops where I wanted them to be, and the complaints had died down.

Some were concerned that maybe we were pushing this a little too far, but when the guild master of a major and corrupted guild died mysteriously, their concern went away.

It was kind of shocking because it happened the day before the guild master decided to do some lobbying, and I wondered if Kim Hyun-Sung was behind it, but surprisingly, the sub guild master ended up being the culprit.

I announced the sad news that the guild master of that guild was actually a traitor who had tried to communicate with the demons.

Of course, the real reason was the struggle for power within the guild, but I had to turn a blind eye to it because it was good news for me.

The atmosphere became a bit unstable, but it soon stabilized. Aside from such trivial incidents like this, things were going along pretty smoothly.

Everyone also seemed like they were waiting for the prophesied day to come, which created a solemn mood, but it wasn't that bad of a mood.

The troops were stationed on the frontlines and bases. The civilians in the nearby cities were all being moved to the back. The foreign light continued to fill up the north, so it’d be strange if people still hadn't noticed that something was going to happen.

When I intentionally spread rumors that a battle was going to take place within a few days, the dragons of the continent started roaring. I hadn't announced anything, but everyone seemed like they already knew what was going on.

The soldiers were probably having negative thoughts; they were probably thinking about defeat, and they were most likely afraid of their mysterious enemies. I checked up on them, but surprisingly, they were all calm. I didn’t need to question it because I

knew very well what was keeping them calm.

'The future of our children.'

The public service advertisement I had made for the dragons had affected the humans and the other races as well. The dragons weren't the only ones who wanted to protect the smiles of the innocent children.

Of course, there were people who said we were just using emotions to control them, but humans tend to become idealists during desperate situations.

Humanity and the other races had chosen to draw a hopeful future to overcome their fear, and the Continental Protection Management Committee had shown them the perfect future.

People across the continent were saying about how we needed to protect what was ours with our own hands, so I didn't even need to force them to enlist. There were so many people volunteering for the army, which also increased the morale of the army.

Those who were willing to sacrifice themselves said things along the lines of, *"We must protect what is ours," "We must light our future with our own hands," "We can become the lamp that lights the darkness if we gather our strength no matter how small," and "We may all have a role to play."*

They were from all over the continent, and they were ready to sacrifice their lives for the continent. If I had to convert their determination into data…

'Three percent? Actually, is it safe to say that our chances increased by five percent?'

I probably had to increase our chances a bit more. It was very difficult to convert the atmosphere of the continent, the morale of the troops and their determination into data because it was volatile.

"…"

"…"

"Is it that bad? Hurry up and answer me," Lee Ji-Hye urged.

"There's just a lot of vague parts for me to convert it into data, but personally, I think

we've reached about forty-five percent," I replied.

"What if… Jung Ha-Yan overcomes her wall?" she asked.

"Then it'll be way past fifty percent," I answered.

"She's really impactful. Is that why she's been enduring it?" she asked.

"If possible, it's best to let her let it all out at the most crucial moment. At least four days before or one day before," I told her.

"I must be the only one that's worried. I think that's too long. What are you going to do if something goes wrong? She can easily screw everything up and make a mess, and it's a fact that you cannot deny based on what she has done so far. I honestly think Jung Ha-Yan will overcome her wall as well, but there are things I'm worried about. You have to think about those," she suggested.

"We're all going to die anyway if Jung Ha-Yan doesn't overcome her wall. After putting the dragons to the front, we'll immediately execute the Noah's Ark plan. That's why I'm watching, noona. I'd rather have the situation get worse than her not even trying to overcome her wall. We can use her to buy time for our escape, so it's a win-win for us," I explained.

"Is she *that* important?" she questioned.

Lee Ji-Hye already knew how much Jung Ha-Yan was worth, but the question she asked just now was a bit more broad.

"Beyond your imagination, noona. I can guarantee that," I answered.

'It's not like our situation is that bad.'

"Well, if you say so. *Ah*, about Rafael…"

"Don't unplug his life-support system yet. I think he might become helpful once he wakes up. If it doesn't work out, then there's not much we can do. How are you doing, noona?" I asked.

"I'm so busy to the point that I'm questioning if it's really okay for us to be talking like this. Still, things are going pretty smoothly. The Red Mercenary Guild is a pretty

good guild, and I think I can match the cutoff line that Cha Hee-Ra had demanded.

"There are still many things I need to handle, but… I can't spend all my time on just that one task, especially on a day like today," she answered.

I noticed Lee Ji-Hye nodding lightly. My eyes reached the Goddess' Mirror, and on the screen, I saw Oscar, the leader of the Democratic Country. She was standing on a podium. She had long gotten used to announcing news to the people, but she looked pretty nervous today.

However, her nervousness gradually disappeared.

"It's surprising, though. I honestly thought you were going to announce it yourself," Lee Ji-Hye commented.

"I thought it's best if I gave a speech right before the battle. More importantly, Oscar is—"

"Yeah, I agree. I think she has a speech ability as her Unique Habit. She speaks well, and I think she really fits that role," she interrupted.

Lee Ji-Hye was right.

Honestly, Oscar wasn't an eloquent speaker, and she wasn't the type to speak logically either, but her voice and gestures gave off this trustworthy air.

If someone else were to say something, and she repeated it—the people would believe her more than the former. She was the leader of the revolution, so she was the perfect announcer for the upcoming battle. She was nervous at the start, but she was now speaking firmly and with confidence.

The speech wasn't anything special. In some ways, they were simple statements, and they were nothing more than open secrets.

- In the north…

The source of the light falling down in the north.

- On behalf of the gods of the continent, including Benigoa…

Statement about the prophecy, the investigation process of the Continental Protection Management Committee, the Vatican, and many major guilds, and the result from those investigations. The announcement would feel long to some people, but Oscar wasn't done just yet.

- I announce that there is exactly one week left until the day of the prophecy.

“She said it,” she said.

“Yeah.”

-…

“The crowd is more docile than I thought,” she commented.

“They knew it, but they were just keeping quiet. Most of them were probably hoping that the rumors weren't true,” I told her.

- Lastly, I dare to say this to everyone living on the continent.

“…”

- Get ready.

“…”

- Get ready to protect the land built by the goddess that she has entrusted to her son.

“The goddess’ son? Is that you?” Lee Ji-Hye asked.

“I’m not sure,” I answered.

- We can overcome this. This is something we can accomplish if we all work together as one. Of course, we may have to make big sacrifices, but this mission cannot be accomplished if we don’t make sacrifices. I’m not asking you to sacrifice yourselves. I’m not telling you to get ready to sacrifice yourselves but to get ready to win.

“…”

- I’ll sacrifice first. I’ll sacrifice myself so that we can be victorious. I’ll be at the front

and protect this land the goddess has entrusted to her son. I'll sacrifice myself first and fight. I will take up my sword and shield to give the future generation the perfect future.

"…"

- Get ready.

"…"

- Get ready to fight. Get ready to win. We can overcome this. Humanity has always faced trials, and we've consistently overcome them. This won't be any different from the previous hardships and trials we've overcome. Our ancestors have already defended this land through countless battles. War between ideologies, war against nature, war between races, war against power, war against an invisible enemy—we've already experienced every possible war there is to experience. Our ancestors taught us how to win, not how to lose.

"…"

- Don't worry. We're here because we've been winning. As always, and as our history has proven, we will seize victory.

"…"

- Get ready.

"…"

- To protect the continent.

"…"

- For victory.

"I'm looking forward to the headlines," Lee Ji-Hye remarked.

I nodded in agreement.

CHAPTER 682
GET READY (2)

["Get Ready to Win," Says Oscar, the Leader of the Democratic Country. A Great Response to Her Determined Speech. - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Democratic Newspaper]

[A Sudden Announcement with Only Seven Days Left. What Is Going to Happen to the Continent? Kasugano Yuno Declines Making an Official Statement. - Yonezu Kenji of Celia Weekly]

[In the End, It's as Goddess Benigoa Prophesied, Says Father Basel… Everyone Will Participate in the Holy War and Enjoy the Victory They Deserve. However, No Words Regarding the Warrior Who Will Fight Beside the Sunset Warrior. - Reporter Kang Yoo-Mi of Linspatch]

[Is the Guild Master of the Blue Guild Shopping for Bags When the Fate of the Continent Is at Stake? Is His Laid-Back Look a Look of Confidence or Nonchalance? There's Also an Anonymous Report That He Has Embezzled Guild Funds… - Reporter Kang Yoo-Mi of Linspatch]

[Personal Safety Measure Notice - Continental Protection Management Committee.]

[Signs of Abnormalities All Over the Continent. Signs of Our Downfall Are Being Revealed. What Are These Demons Disguising as Angels the Experts Are Talking About? Where Do Our Forces Stand Compared to Theirs? - Columnist Park Sung-Kyeong]

[How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves Finally Comes to an End After a Long Run… No News About a Spin-Off Series. - Report Kang Yoo-Mi of Lindel's Department of Culture]

[Chairman Lee Ki-Young Has Not Made a Formal Appearance Yet. No Other External Activities Except the Video Released by the Continental Protection Management Committee… Red Flags About His Health. - Reporter Kim Sung-Kyeong of the Democratic Newspaper]

“It’s really a mess,” I[1] mumbled.

“…”

“A big mess,” I repeated.

“Hey! Miss Kim!”

“…”

“Miss Kim!”

“Yes, sir. I’m over here,” I answered.

“Are you done with your training? You’re looking at the hand mirror today too… I told you that your eyesight is going to get worse if you keep looking at that,” Mr. Choi nagged.

“I can just inject mana into my eyes, and they'll clear up. And my eyes aren't going to get worse in the first place,” I told him.

“What’s it like over there?” he asked.

“It’s… not that great, but it’s not that bad either. Compared to the provoking articles, the comments aren’t that bad. Are you done for the day, sir?” I asked.

“Yeah. Honestly, all of my work is just extra work. The atmosphere in other places is roughly the same there,” he replied.

“I see you every day, but it’s really surprising. I didn’t think you’d volunteer to stay back,” I commented.

“I’m just part of the support company anyway… I’m more surprised about you than me. Didn’t you say you were going to the center tomorrow? You’ve really succeeded, Miss Kim,” he said.

“I told you my stats were high,” I reminded him.

“That’s not what I meant. I thought Mr. Ahn or Mr. Park had called for you. I don’t know about me, but with your skills, the Blue—”

"*Shh!*" I interrupted him.

"*Ahem…*"

"I don't know. It could be about that," I said.

"Really?" he asked.

"No. Honestly, joining the Blue Guild is expecting too much… But still, since I know Mr. Park, maybe using him will give me a chance to join them. I heard he contacts you often. It's the same for me. If I'm not being assigned to the central support company, I may be joining the defending troops. At my level, it'll be impossible to join those troops, but who knows? I might even get to shoot arrows from the back," I answered.

"It didn't say which branch of service?" he asked.

"Nothing else was written other than the fact that I'm being assigned to the center. They probably can't tell me. I did leave a message because I was curious, but they said they didn't know as well. Well, it could be nothing… Anyway, take care of yourself. I'm kind of ashamed to say this to you, but… I hope you'll live," I said.

"Don't worry about me. If things get dangerous, I can just retreat… *tsk*. I'm more worried about you, Mr. Park, and Mr. Ahn. I won't see you out, so have a safe trip and fight hard…" Mr. Choi said.

"I'm leaving tomorrow," I told him.

"Then tomorrow…"

"You don't have to come out to see me. I'm sure we'll meet once it's over. Mr. Park said that we should get some beer once it's over," I said.

"Sounds good to me," he nodded and grinned, showing his teeth to me.

I didn't think I'd see him again, but our relationship had to have been stronger than I thought. At first, I didn't really like seeing him, but I ended up growing fond of him because we had been working together for so long.

'I wonder if he'll survive.'

I honestly wasn’t in the position to be worrying about others. As Mr. Choi said, it wasn't strange that we would get conscripted to fight where the fighting was the fiercest.

Of course, the base was filled with many powerful people aside from Mr. Park and Mr. Ahn, but I could easily figure out that it was going to be the most dangerous area. It was directly in front of the large light, and Father Lee Ki-Young—no, Chairman Lee Ki-Young and the Guild Master of the Blue Guild were stationed there as well.

It was connected to all forward bases in the north, and the strongest forces were on stand-by there. Most of the powerful figures could be categorized into a special interest group, I was sure they weren’t lying when they said they’d take the lead.

Obviously, the comments weren’t that bad either. Of course, the Blue Guild’s guild master’s unexpected eccentricity had caused controversy, but we only had six days left until the prophesied day, so who would care about that?

Reports from the anonymous informant about how he had used eight to ten billion or that he had even embezzled guild funds quickly died down.

The only bait I had left was that the book—How the Alchemist and the Genius Swordsman Loves—was coming to an end. Of course, it was none of my business since I wasn't a reader, but I was sure Nature Lover was looking forward to it the most.

I looked away from Mr. Choi and turned my gaze to my hand mirror.

I saw a forum thread abuzz with activity.

[Title: Day of the Prophecy, There’s Only Six Days Left.]

[Lindel Villager: I’m surprised because it’s quieter than I thought, and people seem to have accepted it without qualms. A long time ago, my friend and I asked each other what we would do a week before the end of the world as a joke. We talked about what we would do and thought about it often, but now that it's actually about to happen, we’re eerily calm about it. I don’t know why this is happening, but I just end up going back to my daily life. Even the neighborhood is quiet. No one is committing crimes, and no one is acting like a madman, trying to fulfill their bucket list. Is everyone okay?]

[Dirt Spoon: Maybe it's because they think the continent isn't doomed. As Miss Oscar said, they're not even thinking of the possibility of them losing… If you think about it, this isn't the first time the continent almost came to an end.]

[Dirt Spoon: It happened when a war broke out between the Republic and the Democratic Country. It was also like that during the Laios and demon summoning incident. I heard when the tutorial dungeon first opened, the denizens of the continent talked about it a lot… They're probably thinking that things are going to work out this time as well and that everything is going to be okay… I also think things are going to work out well.]

[Lindel Villager: But it's too quiet…]

[Unknown ID: Then do you want people to run around screaming fire or run rampant like madmen or those doomsday enthusiasts? You didn't think criminals would start setting temples on fire, did you?]

[Lindel Villager: I wasn't thinking that…]

[Unknown ID: If you really think that Oscar and the Continental Protection Management Committee discovered all this just a week ago, then you're really stupid. *Hehehe*. Really.]

[Dirt Spoon: ?]

[Unknown ID: I think they knew about this incident at least a few months ago. They announced it after building an atmosphere that's as comfortable as possible for civilians to accept the news. They made the official announcement yesterday, but they already knew about it long ago.]

[Dirt Spoon: That's true.]

[Unknown ID: They were probably worried about public opinion and security. I'm sure they already took care of those crazy bastards who are running around saying it's the end of the world and trying to pull something crazy. *Hehehehe*. Can't you tell just by the news about how the guild master next to us is dying? Who'd believe the information that their sub guild master was the one who had killed them? Just look at the forward base or the main front line. No one is running around like a madman.]

[Lindel Villager: Then what's the atmosphere like right now?]

[Unknown ID: I’m not at the frontline, so I wouldn’t know, but why do you think they’re not busy preparing for the war? They’re not the type to cram for things. They finished preparing a long time ago, and since it’s just a few days before the exam, they’re just lying in bed, adjusting their condition and reading books. They've already placed the troops, and they're done getting supplies as well as with their training.]

[Lindel Villager: That headcanon of yours…]

[Unknown ID: Call it an educated guess. This is good news for you guys because the continent has already finished preparing for the battle with the enemy. If you don’t believe me, tag Nature Lover. They said they work for the Blue Guild. They’ll probably know better than me.]

‘Who the hell is this guy?’

I couldn’t help but nod at their story. I was feeling a bit relaxed, but my jaw dropped when I read what he said. There were some parts that didn’t make sense, but it was highly likely that they weren't lying. It was true that the higher-ups were giving off that kind of atmosphere, and the bases were the biggest evidence of it, but…

‘It doesn’t really feel like we’re doing something bad.’

It was a great thing that the Committee was done preparing for the upcoming threat, and if I were to nitpick, I would say that I disliked how the Committee had decided to hide the deadline from the people.

I sat down and placed my hand on my hand mirror. I saw a new comment on the thread.

[Nature Lover: Of course, we’ll make preparations. Who wouldn’t? The prophecy was already given to us a few years ago. Stop spreading conspiracy theories.]

[Unknown ID: It’s not like I said anything strange. All I said was that you guys did well preparing… Stop being so overdramatic. Don’t you think the timing is a little too coincidental? *Hehehe.* Stop pretending like you don’t know when we already know the truth.]

[Nature Lover: What would you know when you’ve never been on site and all you do is tap on your hand mirror?]

[Unknown ID: I'm right, and that's why you're talking so informally now.]

[Unknown ID: Oscar, the Democratic Country's leader, has told us to get ready, but they're done preparing. In other words, we can interpret her words as telling us to make our own preparations. I think she wants us to write our wills or something.]

[Unknown ID: I'm sure the Blue Guild is also eating a feast and enjoying their last meal right about now. You can tell because Nature Lover still has time to respond. That's the situation with the Blue Guild right now. That guild is pretty corrupted as well…]

[Lindel Villager: Nature Lover, is that true? Are you guys done preparing?]

[Nature Lover: No, we're not. There are many delicate parts that require our attention. I can't tell you the details because they're top secret but don't trust Unknown ID. I'm already stressed out right now… Why are you acting like a know-it-all?]

[Archangel PR Chairman: Unknown ID is right. I'll vouch for them.]

[Nature Lover: Who are you to vouch for them?]

[Archangel PR Chairman: I'm sure they're right.]

[Nature Lover: *Uh…]*

[Dirt Spoon: Nature Lover, did you unblock them?]

[Nature Lover: No, I didn't… Why would I unblock them?]

[Archangel PR Chairman: There are still a few puzzle pieces missing, but I think it's safe to say that they're done with the preparations.]

[Nature Lover has blocked Archangel PR Chairman.]

[ID Archangel PR Chairman doesn't exist.]

"*Uh…"*

[Nature Lover has blocked Archangel PR Chairman.]

[ID Archangel PR Chairman doesn’t exist.]

“What the?” I said.

The chat erupted into an uproar. Everyone sent question marks one after another, and they weren’t really saying anything. It was the same for me. My gaze was fixated on the hand mirror in my hand.

‘There has never been a bug like this.’

Benigoa Net was different from the Internet we use on Earth, so bugs like this nor server errors couldn't possibly occur on the Benigoa Net.

“Isn’t that what they told us?”

[Archangel PR Chairman: Of course, there are issues that haven’t been resolved yet, and there’s someone who still hasn't been able to overcome their wall yet… Well, this one will be taken care of…]

[Nature Lover: Is the server okay? What’s wrong with Benigoa Net?]

[Archangel PR Chairman: I’m also bothered by the fact that our poor gray child is still unconscious. I don’t exactly want to be in his place, but he has done a good job winning over the guardians of the continent… I don’t think there are any issues with the image that the Continental Protection Management Committee and our Mr. Lee Ki-Young are drawing. There are many variables… but they’ll probably overcome it.]

[Lindel Villager: Scary. Who said the server is going to get weird once war breaks out? What’s going on right now?]

[Nature Lover: I can’t block them. It keeps telling me that the ID doesn’t exist.]

[Unknown ID: Who are you?]

[Archangel PR Chairman: Still, I'm really curious about the decision Kim Hyun-Sung is going to make. Whatever happens, it's not a bad bet for me, and it’s very surprising that Mr. Lee Ki-Young decided to roll the dice… Really, humans are funny.]

[Nature Lover: Who are you? If you don’t tell us who you are right now…]

[Archangel PR Chairman: Whatever happens, it'll be good news for all of you because they're done preparing against external factors.]

[Unknown ID: I searched their ID just now, and nothing came up… It's fuckin' scary. Who are they? Who are you?]

[Lindel Villager: The comments they wrote are disappearing as well. There's no information about them at all. How did they register here? I can't track them. Nothing is coming up.]

[Dirt Spoon: I'm leaving. I'm scared.]

[Archangel PR Chairman: Whatever the result… I'll be watching with great interest.]

"…"

[Archangel PR Chairman: I'll see you all next time.]

"Who was that…?" I mumbled.

[Archangel PR Chairman has left the room.]

"Who are you…?" I muttered.

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1. Miss Kim's POV ☜

CHAPTER 683
GET READY (3)

"Deok-Gu is going to be late?" I[1] asked.

"H-He said he'll come after finishing his training. I-I heard he's giving additional lessons to people who need it… He said he'll be here soon," Jung Ha-Yan answered.

'This pig was the one who suggested that we all meet up.'

"We can just go first and wait for him then. What do you think? Are you okay with that?" I asked.

"*Huh? Ah*, yes, I'm fine with it," she answered as she nodded.

I honestly didn't need to ask her because I knew her condition better than anyone. I determined that her mental state was a bit unstable, but because she had spent a lot of time with me, she didn't react like she was being cornered.

Obviously, she would only show that reaction whenever she was with me since the void that Han Sora had left by her departure was still there.

Jung Ha-Yan was pretending that she was fine, that it was none of her business, and that she didn't care about Han Sora now that they had cut ties, but I could tell that she was still being affected by Han Sora's departure.

'I think I'm going to be the one who's going to feel uncomfortable at this rate.'

I was honestly kind of uncomfortable.

I liked that all the guild members were gathering, but Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora had cut ties. They went their own ways after that big fight.

Han Sora would still send messages from time to time asking about Jung Ha-Yan's condition, and Jung Ha-Yan would write and erase an apology letter to Han Sora, but on the outside, they were in a cold war.

I was starting to get nervous at the thought that Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora wouldn't even spare each other a glance, even though the other members were getting along. I turned to Jung Ha-Yan and saw that she looked pretty nervous as well.

“I-Is Sora coming, too?” Jung Ha-Yan asked.

“I’m sure she will since she’s part of the guild. How about you use this opportunity and talk it out with her?” I suggested.

“I-I-I’m not going to,” she stuttered.

“…”

“I-I don’t care about her. I don’t feel anything for her… S-She’s a stranger to me now. I really don’t care about her anymore,” she continued.

‘No, you do care about her.’

One of Jung Ha-Yan’s main interests was probably about how close she was to Han Sora. In this case, I didn't think that it’d be a bad idea to have her let it all out after the guild meeting was over.

I was having silly thoughts while I was about to enter the room with Jung Ha-Yan.

“Sub Guild Master.”

I heard a voice. I turned my head and saw someone.

Jung Ha-Yan turned around as well, and she bowed slightly in greeting.

“Miss Kim Mi-Young. It’s been a while. Have you been doing well?” I asked.

“Yes, thanks to you… Actually, there’s something I need to tell you…” Kim Mi-Young said cautiously.

“*Ah…* If you’re not busy, can we talk after the meeting is over?” I asked.

“It’s important… I’m really sorry for making this request, but if you can just spare a moment of your time…” she requested.

“Well, in that case…”

I glanced over at Jung Ha-Yan, and she nodded as if she was okay with it, but I wasn’t okay with it because I was worried about what would happen if Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora ever encountered each other without me. We had arrived earlier than scheduled, but I was still worried that Han Sora was waiting in the room by herself.

“Inside…” I said.

“The guild master arrived early and has been waiting for everyone,” Kim Mi-Young replied.

“Alright, let’s go. You go in first, Ha-Yan. It won’t take long,” I told her.

“O-Okay.”

“So, is something wrong?” I asked.

“It’s not as serious as you think, but it’s something you should know… I’d like to apologize again. It’s been a while since you were on vacation…” she answered.

“It can’t be helped since it’s urgent,” I commented.

“It might not be a big deal, but… I… Hold on,” she paused.

She looked kind of nervous. I was worried that something serious had happened, but… surprisingly, she showed me the chat logs of a certain forum thread on Benigoa Net. I couldn't help but think that perhaps she had lost her marbles while I was reading the chat logs, but I soon understood why she wanted to talk to me privately.

‘What’s this?’

It was a good thing that she reported this to me, and the people in the forum thread were probably shocked as well. It wasn’t strange for Kim Mi-Young to investigate the matter, as it was really shocking. Still, she was probably worried that she would look stupid after reporting a forum thread on Benigoa.

‘I think that’s why she was nervous.’

She knew that she had to be sensitive about every little variable, so she reported this

to me despite feeling nervous. The first thing that caught her attention was probably the description of a gray child. The truth about Rafael being on life support, but the user knew it for some reason. In addition…

'They made remarks about how we gained the favor of the guardians of the continent.'

"It'd be nice if it were a simple bug, but… there's something I don't quite understand. I contacted Benigoa Net just in case, but not only does the ID not exist within the server, but we can't see them on the network as well. I'm certain they broke through the server from the outside, but we can't find any traces of that," Kim Mi-Young explained.

"Have you asked Max?" I asked.

"Yes," she answered.

"Who discovered this?" I asked.

"A tip came in anonymously… I didn't try to find out their identity, but if you'd like…"

"No, there's no need to go that far. I think I have an idea as to what's going on… You don't have to worry about this issue, Miss Kim Mi-Young.

"Please discard this report now and delete all records on Benigoa Net. Make sure that the members who were in the same forum thread and the staffer who had submitted this report would keep quiet about this," I ordered.

"Okay."

"That's all you need to do. We can take care of this by tomorrow, so I think it's best if you just rest for today," I suggested.

"No. I'll join after taking care of the order you gave," she declined.

"If that's what you prefer. Anyway, I'm leaving, then," I said.

"Okay."

"…"

"…"

Kim Mi-Young felt relieved when I told her that it wasn't a big deal. I said goodbye to her while smiling as if it were okay, but I actually found it a bit disturbing.

'This… '

"…"

'I think this is Lucifer… '

I wasn't certain, but it was highly likely that it was the case.

'I'm pretty sure it's Lucifer.'

Of course, there was a chance that it could be someone else, but ordinary people couldn't break through Benigoa Net's defenses, I was leaning more toward the idea that the mysterious user was Lucifer. In addition, Max had no idea of the user's existence until they were reported.

Humans were out of the question, and I thought it was one of the two sides above, but I didn't think it was anyone from the light. In that case, the demons would be on the list of suspects. If I were told to pick a demon who could play this kind of trick without the light side knowing about it, there was one demon whose name I would definitely speak.

'I was wondering what she was up to. Is this how she's been spending her time?'

Lucifer was the type to enjoy watching chaos from the sidelines, so I was pretty sure that she was behind this. At the same time, it was pretty absurd. I had no idea why she had decided to reveal her presence like this. Of course, it could simply be because she had gotten bored and wanted to have some fun.

Honestly, there was a high chance that it was the reason. I probably didn't have to think too deeply into this because Lucifer probably just wanted to spoil everyone about what was to come by creating a Benigoa Net account.

However, I started feeling strange after thinking that Lucifer could be the one behind it.

Was this how Jin Cheong felt when he was playing that board game with me?

'Let's not worry about it.'

"How can I not worry about it? Shit, I was even backstabbed," I mumbled.

Seeing that there wasn't anything strange in the last few lines on the chat log, I couldn't help but think that she just wanted to make her presence known.

The people couldn't block her, and her ID apparently didn't exist.

It felt like she was openly saying, *"Look at me."*

This Archangel PR Chairman was probably trying to attract my attention. There were many interesting parts in their speech, but a certain paragraph caught my attention.

[Still, I'm really curious about the decision Kim Hyun-Sung is going to make. Whatever happens, it's not a bad bet for me, and it's very surprising that Mr. Lee Ki-Young decided to roll the dice…]

I had no idea what Lucifer was talking about.

'The decision Kim Hyun-Sung is going to make?'

Would he choose the light or the darkness? The continent or Light Ki-Young?

'A bet that's not bad for Lucifer?'

It was probably just an expression, but I had never met a bet with her. I also had no idea what she was talking about when she said that I had decided to roll the dice.

"What does she mean by rolling the dice? Is it me going all-out for the continent's sake? Perhaps the fact that I was allowing Kim Hyun-Sung to stay as Doom Hyun-Sung was a form of gambling?" I questioned.

I didn't think she meant it in the literal sense of the word *bet*.

Just like Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora's relationship, the friendship between Lucifer and I was muddy.

I had never talked to Lucifer privately since the Doom Hyun-Sung incident. She had also never approached me again, and I had never approached her again, either. I wasn't sure what the crazy crow was trying to do, but she was definitely up to something.

'Shit. What if she's tricking me into thinking that it's a big deal when it's not?'

Was this how Kim Hyun-Sung felt after getting backstabbed by the masked scum?

I only got backstabbed once, but I was already paranoid about everything

'I can see why he has PTSD.'

I finally understood why Kim Hyun-Sung was always full of doubts.

[Whatever happens…]

'What is she talking about?'

Based on the situation, she was probably talking about the continent's destiny. However, I couldn't help but be worried about the words *Kim Hyun-Sung* and *bet.*

"Shit."

'It feels uncomfortable.'

I had no idea why, but I felt uncomfortable all over. I wasn't sure if this was the right example, but it felt like there was a really thick fog before me. I was probably suffering from PTSD, and it was most likely the reason that I couldn't help but doubt every single word that would come out of just about anyone.

The discomfort was coming from me, and I felt like something inside of me knew that Lucifer and I had made a bet. I wasn't certain of it, but I felt like I remembered it when I saw the chat logs. Should I dig deeper?

Wouldn't it be a good idea to see what this was all about?

'No, don't do it.'

What?

'Don't do it.'

I grabbed my head, and I felt everyone's gaze land on me.

I quickly turned and saw Jo Hye-Jin looking at me in astonishment. It seemed that she was still munching on the amnesia bait that I had made. I thought the bait had already lost its flavor, but I was clearly mistaken.

Jo Hye-Jin looked sad as she approached me.

"Here…"

"W-What is it? I'm not in pain right now," I told her.

"Take this," Jo Hye-Jin offered.

"Miss Hye-Jin? What is this?" I asked.

'Why do you look so sad? You're crying. Shit.'

"I don't know either," she answered.

"So why…"

"I don't know either. You gave me this yourself," she replied.

"When did I do that?" I asked.

"You told me not to tell you," she said.

"What are you talking about? Are you high, Hye-Jin?" I questioned.

"You really told me not to tell you. You told me not to say anything and to keep it with me. You said to give this to you when I see you grabbing your head or when you look anxious," she explained.

"That doesn't make sense…" I mumbled.

Jo Hye-Jin handed me a letter. When I opened the letter half in doubt, I immediately understood what was happening. The handwriting was familiar—there was no way I

wouldn’t recognize it because it was my handwriting.

- Don’t try to remember it. You’ll win the bet if you just keep going.

I still couldn’t remember it, but I knew one thing.

“Fuck…”

I met up with Lucifer and…

“*Ha…*”

I erased the memory of our meeting.

---

1. Lee Ki-Young’s POV ☜

CHAPTER 684
I ERASED MY MEMORIES (1)

'What kind of shitty situation is this?'

I would definitely be in an advantageous position if I just stayed still and did nothing. It was weird how Lucifer wanted me to notice that there was an ongoing bet between us, and if I would win the bet so long as I didn't do anything, I just had to do that, then.

However, I was still taken aback by the sudden turn of events. It felt like I was suddenly dropped in the middle of a mystery thriller movie. I truly didn't expect that something like this would happen to me.

The enemies that would arrive in just a few days filled my head, and I didn't have the luxury to think about anything else. The only thing that I could do was take care of the guild members and the people around me.

'I don't have to worry about it.'

I tried my best to remember what had happened, but I really couldn't remember it. I couldn't remember each and every day perfectly, but it didn't feel like there was a gap in my memories.

My memories flowed so smoothly that I couldn't help but question if the erasure had started from the Doom Hyun-Sung incident. It seemed like Lucifer and I had made that bet when the foreign light had fallen, but…

'We could've also done it before that.'

Of course, it could also be way before that.

I didn't have any memories of it, so it was best to keep all possibilities open.

I didn't want to imagine it, but what if Lucifer and I had met way before our supposed meeting?

‘What can I do? That crow’s acting skill is on another level.’

It was unlikely, but I had to consider several variables.

Not only was the crow a problem, but I was starting to be bothered by the attribute I had obtained when my Intelligence stat went over 90 points. Lucifer had given such a strong hint, so the fact that I couldn’t remember what had transpired was difficult to understand.

I probably needed to trigger or meet a certain condition to recover those memories.

I knew I wouldn't find any answer even if I were to think hard and long about it, but I couldn't stop thinking about it. The note was basically telling me that everything was going to work out just fine if I were to just keep thinking that everything was going to be fine and just hold out.

However, my anxiety was amplified by the fact that I was about to get swept away without knowing anything. It seemed Lee Ji-Hye was right when she called me a control freak—no, she was definitely right.

‘Shit… Yeah, I think I'm a control freak.’

I couldn’t stand still. It was probably the reason why I had chosen to erase my own memories and assigned this task to Jo Hye-Jin. It was definitely because I knew that I would do whatever I could to try and recover those memories. I wouldn’t just stand by, so I left this note as advice to myself.

‘Shit, no. It can't be that simple. What if this is a trap?’

If I had expected myself to dig up the secret, I would’ve prepared a different assignment for Jo Hye-Jin. Knowing my scummy personality, I would’ve played a few tricks here and there. I could also bet everything that I had that I would have installed a few traps as well

I could have also waited for myself to get obsessed with finding the treasure after handing myself a treasure map. Of course, there was also a chance that the map itself was the bait to trick me into going somewhere else.

Basically, it was highly likely that me telling Jo Hye-Jin to give me this note could be a trap—no, it was definitely a trap.

'I probably wanted it to start with Jo Hye-Jin. Right? That's what I'm expecting. I'm right.'

"You're… seriously a shitty bastard," I cursed.

Figuring out the trap was harder than setting one up.

This example was a bit different, but clarifying was more difficult than instigating.

I bit my lips.

Jo Hye-Jin looked at me worriedly. She looked at me like I wasn't just suffering from short-term memory loss but from full-blown amnesia now. She looked really anxious, and she obviously had no idea what to say.

"Sub Guild Master…" Jo Hye-Jin mumbled.

"When did you get this?" I asked.

"Like I told you before…"

"Yes?"

"You told me not to tell you no matter what," she continued.

'Yeah, I'm sure I did.'

"Hurry up and—No, forget it. You don't have to tell me since the time period doesn't really mean anything. There's no need for me to ask. It's pretty obvious…" I told her.

It was probably when I started using the amnesia bait because I had already told her indirectly that it was okay to lie about it. I also knew that I wouldn't start acting like a crazy man from out of the blue.

My anxious look would revive the amnesia bait, so Jo Hye-Jin wasn't the problem.

However, the mood could become ruined if she were to tell Doom Hyun-Sung.

It was better to deal with it as calmly as possible. I had to act like it wasn't a big deal. More importantly, I didn't like digging deeper into this because this was no different

from me doing things the other person wanted me to do.

There was no need to start the maze when I knew that I couldn't clear it.

It was a clear fact that I had erased my own memories, and the answer was hidden somewhere. It wouldn't be too late for me if I were to search around nearby for the answer before digging deeper.

"…"

"…"

"I haven't lost all of it. The only part I have trouble remembering is meeting you… I remember everything else. I must've been kind of exhausted back then. I must've been mentally exhausted if I visited you for no reason and handed you this note. I think I was just really stressed out, so I'm having trouble remembering that specific day, so don't worry. I remember the content written on the note," I told her.

"…"

"I was grabbing my head because I was thinking about other things." I continued.

"…"

'Damn it, shit, shit… '

Jo Hye-Jin looked like she didn't believe me at all, and her doubtful look was actually starting to pressure me. I didn't think that she'd tell Kim Hyun-Sung, but I was still worried.

"Let's head inside for now," I said.

"If you're tired, then you should just rest for today. I'll explain the situation to the guild master…" Jo Hye-Jin suggested.

"Don't you remember that issue we had last time? Mr. Hyun-Sung also has an idea about it. Also, I'm telling you this just in case you're worried, but… I've already reached an agreement with Mr. Hyun-Sung, so you don't have to worry about him.

"*Ah*, and spending time with the guild members is my way of resting. It relieves my

stress. If you're that worried, then spend a day with me. I think that'll help you relieve your stress as well… Are you available the day after tomorrow?" I asked.

I should be able to find a tiny clue in the next two days. If I couldn't find any clues, then I could just enter the maze.

"I think tomorrow will work better for me," she answered.

'No, I have things I need to look into tomorrow.'

"Why tomorrow? Do you have plans the day after tomorrow?" I asked.

"It doesn't matter if I do. I need to be more certain about some things," she answered.

'Why do you look guilty, though? Do you have plans?'

"Do you have plans?" I asked.

"I do. With Miss Ji-Hye…" she muttered.

"…"

"…"

'What the? Why are you guys hanging out so much?'

"We're not going out to have fun. We heard rumors that a place near the site that was once used as an underground auction house is now being used as a shelter and bunker, so we're just stopping by to inspect it. From what I heard, there are more things to check than I thought…" she explained.

'That's a lie. We don't need an underground shelter.'

"And a monster that was being auctioned in the underground auction house somehow managed to escape. It's not dangerous since its rank is pretty low, but I think she wants to take care of it quietly. I'm indebted to her, so I'll do it as a way of paying her back…" she added.

'Illegal monster trading, my ass… '

We had Noah's Ark, so an underground shelter was unnecessary.

“It won’t take long. Of course, it might end up being longer, depending on the situation…” she said.

‘And shit… the underground auction house… that’s our memory… ’

“The day after tomorrow works better for me… Let’s meet then… Can you…” I paused.

“…”

“Can you… meet me then?” I asked.

“…”

I felt bad for Lee Ji-Hye, but our Jo Hye-Jin wasn’t so cold-hearted that she’d abandon a sick person. As expected, she nodded at me.

“It’s been a while since we played chess, so we can catch up while playing. I’ll make sure to talk to Miss Ji-Hye. When I have time, we can go to the bunker together. Is that okay?” I asked.

“No, there’s no need for you to go there. We can always go the next day. It’s better not to do anything after you've relieved your stress right before a big event. I think it’s best if I tell Miss Ji-Hye myself,” she suggested.

“Well, that’s true, but… Anyway, I’m glad you and Miss Ji-Hye are getting close, but don’t get too close to her,” I warned.

“What?”

“I don’t want to tell you this, but she’s kind of a calculative person,” I answered.

“*Huh?*”

“I’ll tell you the details later, so just keep that in mind for now. If that’s everything, I’ll see you in two days. Let’s drink wine while playing chess,” I told her.

“Okay.”

“We’re kind of late. Let’s hurry,” I said.

“Okay.”

Just like that, Jo Hye-Jin and I started heading to the meeting place.

She looked kind of uneasy and seemed surprised by the fact that I didn’t ask her about the note or any other issues. She was probably thinking that I was going to ask her questions during our meeting two days later, but she still couldn't understand the attitude that I had taken earlier.

Perhaps she was thinking that I had already accepted the situation, but…

‘I haven’t accepted it yet.’

It wouldn't be strange if I started panicking.

We were moving for now since I had other things to handle, but I honestly couldn’t think of anything else. I was looking forward to this meeting because I thought I would be able to relax a bit, but things were starting to get chaotic for me.

That was when I thought I should slowly work my way back from the beginning.

“Hey, what are you doing outside?”

I heard a loud and familiar voice behind me. There was no way I wouldn’t recognize that voice. I looked back and saw the large pig. He had to be happy about the fact that I had accepted his suggestion to meet with the guild members because he was smiling brightly.

However, I felt annoyed for some reason.

‘This pig.’

I know I was late as well, but my situation was different. The pig was doing useless things while I was fighting by myself. He still looked the same, and I was sure that he would remain annoying to me even after many years.

“You… you…” I stuttered.

"…"

"You…"

"I thought I was really late… but it doesn't seem to be the case. Did it just start?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"You pig…" I said.

"…"

"…"

"*Huh?*"

"…"

"What the… Shit… Damn it… What's going on…" I questioned.

"Sub Guild Master?" Jo Hye-Jin called out.

"Wait… wait… wait…" I stammered.

"…"

"…"

"…"

"Hyung-nim… are you crying?" he asked.

CHAPTER 685
I ERASED MY MEMORIES (2)

“Why are you suddenly…” Park Deok-Gu asked.

‘I don’t know either, damn it. I don’t know.’

“Are you okay? Is your headache…” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

Park Deok-Gu's dumbfounded expression started to become blurry in my eyes. I could see Jo Hye-Jin standing next to him, and she was overreacting as usual, but I could understand why she was reacting that way.

This was just too absurd.

I couldn't stop crying, and I had no idea what to do. I knew I had to do something about this, but I couldn't control my emotions. The tears were making my eyes blurry, and their voices started to sound muffled in my ears.

My body wasn't listening to me, and it actually felt pretty scary.

“A-Are you hurt somewhere? Are you in pain? And what does she mean by a headache? Are you sick?” Park Deok-Gu asked.

“I’ll go get Miss Hee-Young or Miss Elena right… Actually, they should be inside,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

‘No, damn it. Don’t do that. It’s not because of that.’

I couldn’t calm down, and I bit my lips forcefully, afraid that they might hear me groaning, but I couldn’t stop crying. Park Deok-Gu ran over to me and grabbed my shoulders to look at my face.

Tears continued to drip down my cheeks.

“Hold on, I have something in my eyes…” I said.

I knew it was an absurd excuse, but I was so shocked that I ended up saying something so ridiculous.

“Nothing went into your eyes. Tell me why this is happening,” he demanded.

"If… I can do it…”

“…”

“…”

"You can do it better."

“Noonim, is our hyung-nim okay? Why is he suddenly…” he asked.

‘This isn’t an act… I’m being serious.’

“D-Does your head hurt? Why am I always the last one to find out?” he complained.

“I’m going to save you, hyung-nim. Do you have your memories, at the very least?”

“I’m asking if our hyung-nim is really sick somewhere. He was fine, so why is he like this all of a sudden?” he asked.

“You saved me so many times. Do you still remember?”

“D-did something happen? Have you been experiencing any hardships…” he questioned.

"I don’t think that’s the case. No matter what you say, you basically saved my life, both physically and mentally. Thank you for getting hurt because of this stupid brother of yours."

“Hey… s-stop crying. Why are you… I’m crying because you’re crying, hyung-nim…” he stuttered.

"Thank you for defending me back at the dungeon and thank you for choosing me. No matter how much I try to remember, it seems like I was being constantly saved by you, hyung-nim. That’s honestly all I can remember. What I’m trying to say is… I owe you a lot, so it’s my turn now…”

“S-Stop crying. Why do you keep crying—Say something…” Park Deok-Gu stuttered.

"I told you that I’m going to save you, hyung-nim. Don’t forget."

“Please calm down,” he said.

“If you can do it… I can do even better.”

“C-Calm down… It’ll be fine,” he said.

“Whatever you can do… I can do better.”

“Everything will be fine. I-I don’t know why this is happening… but don’t worry about anything,” he reassured me.

“If hyung-nim… can do it… I can…”

“…”

“Do… even better…”

“…”

“I can… do… better…”

“…”

“I… can…”

“You…” I mumbled.

“…”

“You crazy pig. You bastard. You useless pig!” I cursed.

“…”

“I'm going to get hurt if you curse at me for no reason…” Park Deok-Gu said.

“Get away from me, you pig,” I told him.

"…"

"You're sweaty, and you stink, so get away from me," I said.

"I-I came running here because I was late… and—that's not what's important right now. Why are you acting this way all of a sudden? Why are you—"

"Don't worry about it," I interrupted him.

"How could I not wor—"

"…"

"…"

"It's really nothing, so don't worry about it and get away from me already," I repeated.

Park Deok-Gu quietly moved back, and even though my voice was trembling, I could feel myself calming down. The world was returning to its original state little by little. The dying Park Deok-Gu disappeared, and I no longer heard his voice.

'What's wrong with him?'

My head started hurting because I suddenly saw a vision of our past lives. When I felt myself tearing up again, I shook my head and noticed Park Deok-Gu looking at me with a bitter face.

'This pig.'

I wasn't sure why this pig was acting like this, but his tears surprised me. He seemed to be panicking more than me, and it was the same for Jo Hye-Jin. It seemed she was a bit embarrassed because she also didn't expect that she would cry.

I took a deep breath and breathed out slowly. I felt the tumultuous emotions abate. I felt kind of unstable, but it wasn't a big problem because another problem that suddenly showed up filled my head.

'What the? What is it, damn it? Why am I seeing that all of a sudden, and why was I crying to begin with?'

I didn’t want to imagine it, but I quickly came to an assumption. Of course, my assumption didn’t make any sense. The chances of it being true were very low, and it was honestly an unnecessary assumption. Obviously, I didn’t have any proof, and the only thing that’d support my assumption was my vested interests.

Memories of my past life. Perhaps I had recovered my memories of the Dark World, but it was more like the emotions I felt back then were pouring into me. I couldn't really call them memories.

‘What kind of shitty situation is this?’

It was a mystery how I was suddenly struck by those visions, but it wasn't that difficult of a puzzle to solve so long as I thought that Lucifer was involved. If regaining my memories of my past life was related to the bet I had made with Lucifer, and I had to erase my own memories to win the game, then it would make complete sense.

The puzzle pieces didn’t fit perfectly, but they suited the overall image.

It made even more sense based on the timing. Park Deok-Gu hadn't shown this kind of reaction back then. It seemed that the bet was made after I had talked to him about the landing operation Of course, I could make the assumption that my suppressed emotions had exploded because I had found a clue, but I thought my earlier assumption was true.

Honestly, nothing would really change about me even if I were to recover the memories of my past life. However, the bet could be related to Kim Hyun-Sung, which meant…

‘There are going to be variables.’

Kim Hyun-Sung was a lovely regressor in the eyes of the current me, but I clearly despised him during my past life. The memories of my past life would have a negative influence on him, and it would mean that I had lost the bet.

In other words, I had erased my own memories, knowing that influencing Kim Hyun-Sung negatively meant Lucifer winning the bet. Of course, it was also possible that I had erased those memories simply because I was dissatisfied with them.

‘Is there even anything left of him?’

Personally, I wanted this assumption to be true.

Nothing was confirmed yet, but I thought it would be great to possess the mind of the Dark World Lee Ki-Young. It would be a great party trick to make the two egos fight for supremacy in the same body while the other was yelling, *"Get out from my body! You masked scum!"*

However, I didn't think it would be funny if it actually happened. I didn't want to give myself a headache by thinking about whether Ki-Young One and Ki-Young Two were the same person.

"One day, what you have done will come back and get you."

The masked scum Jin Cheong's famous words popped into my head, but I shook my head.

'It can be problematic… '

I was determined to continue investigating the matter, but I wasn't ready to take responsibility for the results. If my assumption ended up being correct, then it would mean that everything was going down the wrong road from the start.

If I suddenly thought of our lovely regressor Kim Hyun-Sung as the world's biggest son of a bitch, it would be no different than me declaring that we would all die together. I would probably be itching to backstab him. I could guarantee that the soul of the masked scum in my body would scream at me to backstab him.

"W-Why are you just standing around like that again? Are you sure there's nothing wrong?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

I was nervous even now because the strong emotions were making me tremble. The thing that happened when I saw Park Deok-Gu could happen to Kim Hyun-Sung as well, and I wasn't sure if entering the meeting place was the right thing to do.

"I think it's best if you rest today. Actually, how about receiving treatment first? If not, you should at least find out what's going on with you. You know you're acting really strange today?" Jo Hye-Jin pointed out.

"…"

“If I were to exaggerate a bit… you look like a crazy person right now,” she added.

“What treatment are you talking about, and what in the world are you saying? Why am I the only one who's unaware of so many things? You have to tell me the details so that I can help,” Park Deok-Gu complained.

‘You'll be helpful by staying still.’

“There’s no need for that, Miss Hye-Jin. Also, be quiet, Deok-Gu. It’s nothing serious. I just had some things I needed to talk about… Let’s hurry up and go in. I’m sure they’re waiting,” I told them.

“Are you sure it’s nothing serious?” he asked.

“I swear on Goddess Benigoa’s name that it’s not a big deal. Hurry up and go in. Don’t tell anyone about what just happened, and the same goes for you, Miss Hye-Jin. I don’t want to ruin the mood, so if you want to say something, say it another day. Keeping quiet about it is the best option here. Anyway, aren’t you two going in?” I asked.

“…”

“…”

“Go in,” I urged.

The two looked at each other and opened the door.

I immediately saw the interior of a lavish-looking room.

I thought they would have already started, but it seemed like they had been waiting for us. I opened the door confidently at the thought of wanting to check the scene for myself, but I unknowingly started biting my lips because I had no idea how I was going to react upon seeing them.

The first person that I saw was Jung Ha-Yan.

“O-Over here, oppa.”

She waved her hand exaggeratedly and called me over to where she was seated. I

was worried that my extremely apologetic feelings toward Jung Ha-Yan were going to explode, but I didn't really feel anything.

All I felt was that she was exaggerating because of Han Sora and that she was cute as usual…

'This should be great, right?'

In addition, she wasn't pouting like Park Deok-Gu. It was the same when I looked at Sun Hee-Young, who nodded at me in acknowledgment.

I thought I would feel something different since I had worked with her before, but that wasn't the case at all. I had never met Kim Ye-Ri, Ahn Ki-Mo, Lee Chang-Ryeol, Yoo Ah-Young, and Hwang Jung-Yeon in my past life, so they didn't really matter. It was the same for Elena. Alps was no different from them.

I turned around again and saw Jo Hye-Jin, but I didn't react the same way I did when I saw Park Deok-Gu.

The problem was Kim Hyun-Sung.

As soon as I entered, he immediately walked up to the door and greeted me.

"Mr. Ki-Young."

He spoke as if there was something he wanted to tell me, but I had to ignore him.

"Here…"

"It's been a while, Mr. Chang-Ryeol. How long has it been?" I greeted.

"Mr. Ki-Young… So—"

"I feel like you grow stronger every time I see you," I said, interrupting Kim Hyun-Sung.

"…"

"…"

‘What should I do? I can’t look straight at him.’

“I…”

‘Maybe I shouldn’t have come. Shit, I'm worried that I might suddenly feel like backstabbing him.

CHAPTER 686
I ERASED MY MEMORIES (3)

Lee Chang-Ryeol was stupefied. It seemed that he wasn't used to being in the spotlight because he remained quiet. However, he quickly realized that it was rude not to respond because he spoke, but…

“I should have visited you often, then, Sub Guild Master,” Lee Chang-Ryeol replied.

‘No, I’m not trying to be sarcastic here, Chang-Ryeol. Don’t take it that way.’

I was surprised by his reply. It seemed that he still couldn't get rid of his eminence grise persona because he was still wearing a mask. There was absolutely no need for him to wear a mask here, but he would probably feel uneasy without a mask, so I couldn't really just tell him to stop wearing masks.

He was kind of difficult to deal with because I couldn’t read his expressions, and he would sometimes make the atmosphere awkward with his remarks.

However, I was aware of his deep loyalty to the guild.

He had been working behind the scenes, so it was easy to miss his contributions, but I was aware of how impactful the things he had been doing in the shadows. As such, it wasn't strange for me to compliment him.

In the end, it wasn't strange that I had ignored Kim Hyun-Sung for Lee Chang-Ryeol because it was true that I hadn't been paying attention to Lee Chang-Ryeol.

“I feel kind of bad and embarrassed since I’m telling you this so late, but thank you for everything you have done,” I said.

“I was only doing my job,” Lee Chang-Ryeol said.

“You think that way, yes, but I feel like you haven’t received proper treatment compared to the amount of work you’ve done. There were many chances where I could’ve done something for you… but I hadn't been able to do anything,” I told him.

“I appreciate the thought, sir,” he said.

“I look forward to your continued cooperation for things that are about to happen. Personally, I have a lot of expectations,” I told him.

“I’ll do my best so that I don’t disappoint you,” he said.

Lee Chang-Ryeol bowed slowly and expressed his gratitude. It seemed Lee Chang-Ryeol still hadn't become an extrovert despite spending so much time with the guild members.

‘What’s wrong?’

I noticed Lee Chang-Ryeol's worried look, but it wasn’t just him. Jung Ha-Yan and the other guild members looked at me as if there was something on my face. I was worried that I was unknowingly crying like earlier, but I wasn’t crying at all.

However, it didn’t take long for me to realize that something was wrong.

‘Ah… shit. This… ’

I tried to fix myself somehow, but it seemed that the strong emotions that made my tears fall like a waterfall from my eyes were still there because I looked as if I was going to cry at any moment.

My eyes were probably red, and they probably thought that my breathing was strange. I was sure that my current demeanor was unusual. These people weren't dumb enough to miss such a thing.

I tried my best not to look at Kim Hyun-Sung’s face because I was worried I would feel like stabbing him in the back, but I could now look at him for a different reason.

“You seem… a bit emotional,” Kim Hyun-Sung commented.

“What do you…”

“I know we’re about to face a major crisis, but… a meeting like this after a while is making me feel… a bit emotional. It also reminds me of the first time we met. After several ups and downs, we eventually created a group and we also met new people. I can't help but look back on the process that brought us together and…” I paused.

"…"

"I feel happy. I can't really explain it, but I feel great just looking at you guys," I continued.

I smiled lightly to lighten up the mood, and I started crying fake tears.

Obviously, the guild members looked conflicted.

"Even though I joined late, I can somewhat sympathize with the sub guild master's words. I've been feeling a bit nervous over these past few days… but I feel like I've calmed down after seeing you guys," Ahn Ki-Mo chimed in.

'That's right, Ki-Mo. You always chime in at times like this.'

"Me, too. I feel the same."

Kim Ye-Ri also chimed in while nodding.

"I think I understand what you're saying because we really did experience many things. Just like he said… if you think about it timewise, we haven't been together for a long time, but… I already feel like we're family…"

Even the quiet Yoo Ah-Young said something.

Hwang Jung-Yeon sitting next to Park Deok-Gu spoke next, "It's nothing to be embarrassed about because we're basically family… Isn't that right?"

"Yes, you're right."

The members weren't crying, but they empathized with me, and it wasn't all that bad. I was just acting, but the soft-hearted Elena already looked like she was on the verge of crying.

There wasn't a single human in this room who was questioning why I suddenly came in with a serious face and started making ridiculous comments.

Kim Hyun-Sung and Jo Hye-Jin probably understood why I was saying this, and it was because I was eventually going to forget everyone here. That was why I was looking at everyone and was sad about it—that was probably what they were thinking…

'Wow… even I think this is sad.'

Of course, I had already decided to accept the situation…

The fact that everyone would still be together wouldn't change, but everyone would disappear from the present Lee Ki-Young's memories. When I thought about the ending where I would no longer remember these people whom I laughed with and had truly become a family with, my fake tears rolled down incessantly.

'Let's overcome this, Ki-Young. You can overcome it. A tragic heroic ending. You can handle it.'

"Mr. Ki-Young…"

'I know it's hard, but you managed to handle it up until now. You shouldn't look sad in front of your guild members. Hang in there and overcome it. Lee Ki-Young. The hero of a tragedy must be strong. I won't cry. I won't show any tears.'

I was getting into the atmosphere, so I tried to cry with sincerity, but…

'No, damn it. If I do this, I feel like I'll actually become the hero of a tragic story.'

A mysterious anxiety filled my head. It was to the point that this anxiety came up with the assumption that the masked scum of the past life had entered my body. I thought I would be satisfied by the fact that I had created this atmosphere and had somehow fixed it, but…

'There's no need to overreact.'

I could still feel everyone staring at me.

As expected, someone said, "There's no need to worry so much, Mr. Ki-Young."

"…"

I wasn't sure why, but just hearing his voice made me want to backstab him, but there was no way I would continue to feel this way. Rather than sending Kim Hyun-Sung to a dangerous place once the war broke out, it was better to figure out my current situation.

If my resentment toward Kim Hyun-Sung during my past life had transferred over to my current self, then it was better to take care of that as fast as possible.

I sighed and turned to see Kim Hyun-Sung looking at me sadly.

'Ah… this guy.'

"…"

"…"

He was pretty handsome.

"…"

'Shit, that's a relief. All right… so you didn't go that far. Did it sort itself out? It sorted things out up to this point, right?'

The emotion inside me had to have understood that hating Kim Hyun-Sung would only ruin things or…

'Maybe it's just because it still hasn't actually appeared.'

Regardless of the reason, I was relieved by the fact that I didn't seem to hate Kim Hyun-Sung. I wasn't sure what he was thinking, but Kim Hyun-Sung was looking at me nervously.

'Ah, but I still want to backstab him.'

I could probably move on after dealing with it. I think it'd be fine if I used Pavlov's experiment on this. Since the *soul* inside of me had backstabbed Kim Hyun-Sung many times for over ten years, it wouldn't be strange that I would feel like backstabbing him the moment I saw his face.

However, the *soul* inside of me was calmer than I thought, which had truly taken me by surprise. To be honest, I wasn't expecting it to react as aggressively as when I looked at Park Deok-Gu, but I thought it would start behaving in some way. Park Deok-Gu and Kim Hyun-Sung were the two figures who had affected the masked scum the most.

'Even if it sorted things out… how can it remain this calm?'

It was to the point that I felt kind of bad and happy at the same time. Actually, it was different from that. I felt a slightly different emotion. I couldn't describe it with one word, but…

'Sense of belonging is probably the most accurate phrase to describe it.'

"Are you… feeling better?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"What?"

"You seemed a bit anxious earlier, so I was wondering if there was something you were worried about, or did I do something wrong?" he asked.

"You did nothing wrong, Mr. Hyun-Sung. I should be the one apologizing to you. We were supposed to have a good time… but I feel like I ruined the mood…" I answered.

"No, there's nothing for you to apologize for, Mr. Ki-Young. It's… very understandable. Everyone understands what you're thinking and how you're feeling right now. I should apologize to you because I'm sure that you have a lot on your mind, but we still scheduled this event… I'm sorry," he apologized.

'Something's off… '

"I would've scheduled this event even if you hadn't offered to do so. The idea was also Deok-Gu's brainchild, so you don't have to apologize," I said.

"Thank you for saying that. I… I… *Ah!* Please have a seat. I think we should eat something first," he suggested.

'Did it decide to maintain its current emotions about Kim Hyun-Sung? If that were possible, to begin with, shouldn't it have been able to remain calm when it saw Park Deok-Gu?'

It was nice that nothing was happening, but…

'This is so lame.'

"O-Oppa, over here…"

“Sit over here, sir.”

“…”

“…”

‘It’s so lame.’

I started thinking that way to the point that I was worried about becoming a psychopath.

‘I didn't get tricked, right?’

“I’m going to go to the bathroom…” I said.

“…”

I was really hoping that I didn't get tricked by that crazy bastard. What if all the memories I had about Park Deok-Gu and my past life had all been fabricated? What if they were meaningless, just like the time I had tried to trick the masked scum?

What if it was all a big fat lie because he didn't want me to recover the memories that I had erased for the bet, as well as the content of the bet? What if he had thrown the bait about my memories because he wanted me to move cautiously by myself?

I would have done the same as well if I were him.

I wasn’t sure how far I had gone with giving myself suggestions, but I might have told myself to cry after receiving that letter from Jo Hye-Jin and seeing Park Deok-Gu, which meant that if this assumption was right; all this was a trap I had made for myself.

I had set myself up.

My other self might have thought that there couldn't be a more perfect trap.

It made perfect sense when I thought about how the letter Jo Hye-Jin had given to me was the trigger for all this.

“That crazy bastard…”

It was possible that I had sabotaged myself. Just like how I had messed Jin Cheong up, I could be doing the same for myself at the moment.

“Let’s not make useless assumptions. I should only consider the facts. Just think based on the facts. Think about what I missed,” I told myself.

I saw my reflection in the mirror, and I looked like someone who had gotten backstabbed.

I had to think about it. I had to think about what had happened during the past thirty days and what I had missed. Who did I meet while I was feeling bored, annoyed, and tired? Who were they, and what did I do with them?

My memory wasn't as amazing as Hwang Jung-Yeon's memory, but it was exactly the reason I had to dig deep—this Lee Ki-Young bastard had a bad memory, so I had to dig deeper.

I was nervous because I couldn’t remember everything.

He had to have known that his work wasn’t perfect, and he wasn’t confident in getting things done perfectly, so that was why he had created this trap capable of driving people crazy.

I was sure of it because that was how I often did things. This time was probably no different, so what did I do? What kind of preparations did I make?

Was there really a reason to keep asking myself such questions?

I had taken care of the people I considered my people, and I helped Cha Hee-Ra overcome her wall. I also observed the conflict between Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora and inspected the supplies one last time with Ji-Hye noona.

I ate with Park Deok-Gu, Ahn Ki-Mo, and Kim Ye-Ri and looked at everyone once.

I spoke to Oscar at the continental meeting and contacted her afterward. I also used that time to win over new forces with Dialugia, Dialuria, and Elena. It was the time I had to personally inspect things to see if preparations were going swimmingly.

All these lasted thirty days, right?

I looked at the mirror while grabbing my head, but I couldn't think of anything.

While I was having a useless Q&A session with myself, I suddenly heard a voice in my head. It was probably during the end of the Doom Hyun-Sung event, and I could still remember Lee Ji-Hye… saying this particular sentence to me.

[There aren't… that many guilds left in Lindel. Now that I think about it, Kasugano Yuno said that there was something she needed to tell you. Once this meeting is over, you should go ahead and contact her…]

I could still remember Lee Ji-Hye mumbling those words to me while I was organizing my schedule. She had said those words to me before I joined the strategy meeting where the incident broke out.

"Shit…"

I had to dig deeper into my memory. Did I meet her? Had I ever visited Kasugano Yuno after the foreign light fell in the north?

"Lee Ki-Young, you crazy bastard!" I cursed.

My assumption had to be right.

'Yeah… that's right.'

I couldn't remember meeting Kasugano Yuno.

'Yeah… that's right… This is right… I think this is right. I'm sure… this is right.'

A sinister smile hung on the lips of my face in the mirror.

CHAPTER 687
LEE KI-YOUNG, YOU SCUMMY FRAUD (1)

It was honestly too early to jump to conclusions. I knew myself better than anyone. Just like how I figured out that all this bluffing was a trap. The Lee Ki-Young before his memory was erased might have assumed that I would come this far.

I might end up in another bad situation, but right now, there was a high chance that my current assumption would actually happen. I had to make a plan of what I needed to dig deeper into it for the sake of being able to respond to every variable that would appear from now on.

'Don't get swayed by it. Don't get swayed by it.'

I wasn't sure what I was going to see and what I'd realized, but it was important to remain unaffected. Aside from this, I was sure he had dug up other traps as well, so I thought it was best to investigate the most suspicious locations first.

'Kasugano Yuno.'

I had to check up on her first. I needed enough time to check at least one or two traps. If Kasugano Yuno were a trap set up by Lee Ki-Young, then it could be game over. The Outer God was coming, after all. If I had a bit more time, I could track down the hints and come to a conclusion using them.

However, I had no time to go into all the dungeons to see if there were really treasures hidden inside of them.

Aside from this, I also had many other things to handle. In fact, those were the reasons I couldn't visit Kasugano Yuno right then and there.

Stopping the impending apocalypse was more important than fighting the Lee Ki-Young before his memories were erased.

If I could, I would abandon the apocalypse and this guild meeting just to head straight to Kasugano Yuno, but I really had many things to take care of here.

I had to take care of the guild members' mental health and give them a sense of purpose. I had to take care of the tactical Kim Hyun-Sung again, as well as Jung Ha-Yan and Han Sora, who were still in conflict.

Jung Ha-Yan was still struggling to overcome her wall as well.

'You're a real piece of shit.'

Obviously, I wasn't happy about the fact that he had rolled the dice and handed the problem to me to deal with. I was upset when I thought that he had handed his problems to me while saying, *"Future me! I'll leave it to you!"*

I wanted to vent out my anger, but I wasn't sure about how I could go about that.

I also couldn't look in the mirror and slap my face.

'You bastard.'

I felt empty because I was basically cursing myself.

This was a nightmare where I couldn't make any choices… Thinking that all of this was a puzzle to protect the continent and defeat Lucifer made me feel relieved, but I wasn't exactly sure about that, which made me feel extremely nervous.

"…"

"…"

"Hyung-nim, are you feeling better?" Park Deok-Gu asked.

"I've always been better. I feel like I'm getting calmer these days. You've been taking care of your tasks, right?" I asked.

"Don't you know who I am? I'm your younger brother, so you don't have to worry," he answered.

"…"

"He's right, Mr. Lee Ki-Young. Mr. Deok-Gu has been working really hard…" Elena chimed in.

“See, even Miss Elena said so. Well, I’m a bit embarrassed to tell you this here, but… *Ahem*, anyway, you can look forward to it. I’ve been having fun studying tactics… Recently, I’ve been thinking that perhaps I’m a genius.

"The material you gave wasn’t enough, so I studied the next level. If you can do it, I can do better! You were right all along,” he explained.

Obviously, I didn’t trust him. Meanwhile, Ahn Ki-Mo seemed kind of drunk because he was having fun next to me before chiming in.

“I was a little skeptical at first as well, but when I first saw what he was doing, I didn’t think it was that bad. I actually feel like I can trust him now. The team’s morale is really high…”

“Mr. Ki-Mo. He’s right,” Kim Ye-Ri commented.

“Like I tell you every time, defense is the priority,” I reminded them.

“That’s true, but…”

“If things work out swimmingly from the start, there’s no need to worry about defense,” I said.

“He’s right. The fewer variables we have, the better,” Sun Hee-Young said.

“Hey, I know that, too. You guys are like adults that nag during holidays in the middle of a family reunion… *Ahem*, it’s like you nag about everything I say. Hyung-nim said he trusts me, so I'll be fine. *Ah*, now that I think about it, the thing our Ah-Young is making…” Park Deok-Gu trailed off.

Park Deok-Gu had to have realized that he would be at a disadvantage if our conversation went in that direction, so he changed the topic and turned everyone's attention to Yoo Ah-Young.

“I’ll probably have it done by tomorrow. I could’ve given it to you today, but the finishing process is really important. I still can’t tell the item rank, but I used the materials properly, so it should be pretty high. The same goes for the shield I’ll be giving you, the dagger I’ll be giving to Chang-Ryeol oppa, and the staff Sora will be using…” Yoo Ah-Young answered.

“You can make a staff as well?” I asked.

“Yes. I feel kind of bad for the guild, but the majority of the materials I use are rare materials,” she replied.

“…”

“If I were just a bit stronger, I could have made Semi-Mythic weapons. The Blue Guild has so many rare materials that it wouldn't be strange for it to have quite a few Semi-Mythic items. Unfortunately, I think it's still going to take me a few years before I can take full advantage of those materials.” She continued.

“It's fine,” I told her.

“But…”

“It’s really fine. I mean, think about just how rare Legendary items are. You don’t have to worry about those materials. You’re doing really well right now, so you don’t have to feel guilty about it,” I said.

“I just feel guilty using the guild’s assets…” she muttered.

“Mr. Ki-Young is right.” Kim Hyun-Sung chimed in. “Don’t worry about anything else other than doing your best. You’re being really helpful to the guild, and you’re contributing in more ways than one, Miss Ah-Young.

"I'm also sure that you'll keep on contributing to the guild, so the value of the materials or the guild’s assets isn't really that important,” he explained.

“Guild Master…” Yoo Ah-Young mumbled.

“The only thing you need to think about is what we’re fighting for and what we’re preparing for. You just need to know what we need to protect and do your best within your capabilities. That's more than enough,” he added.

‘It’s been a while since I heard our Hyun-Sung's speech.’

“It’s not just Miss Ah-Young. I'm sure this is a bit too serious for the current mood, but I would like all of you to think about it one more time. You won’t get another chance after today. Think again about what we need to protect even if we end up in

the worst-case scenario," he continued.

'I'd expect nothing less from the guild master. I like your determination.'

"What… we need to protect…" Park Deok-Gu mumbled.

"Yes, Mr. Deok-Gu. That's all you need to think about right now," he said.

"I think I have an idea as to what you're saying, bro," he said.

"…"

"Hey, let's stop this and make another toast. Let's cheer for the things we need to protect!" Park Deok-Gu suggested.

"…"

"For the things we need to protect!" Park Deok-Gu shouted.

"Cheers!"

"C-Cheers."

"Cheers."

I felt relieved seeing the guild members raise their glasses.

'I like their mindset.'

I was sure everyone felt nervous, but I could tell they were brushing that feeling away.

'Hyun-Sung is also doing better than I thought.'

He had become Doom Hyun-Sung, but his nature of protecting the continent was still there. I somewhat understood why he had regressed with such a heavy burden on his shoulders after seeing that he had the eyes of a hero who longed to protect the continent no matter the sacrifice.

His determined gaze had to have assuaged the anxiety of the guild members.

‘I think Ha-Yan is in a good state as well… ’

She was obviously conscious of Han Sora, and it was evidenced by the fact that she was talking to the others. Clearly, she was showing Han Sora that she didn't need Han Sora to live properly.

Han Sora was also doing great in her role of someone who no longer cared about Jung Ha-Yan.

Soon, we started eating while having silly conversations, and it was impressive how Han Sora and Jung Ha-Yan managed to say not even a single word to each other. Their gazes met one time, but they quickly turned their heads away.

‘I guess I can just proceed with the plan.’

I looked around to inspect everyone one last time, but I didn’t find anything that was bothering me aside from my personal issue.

The guild members started talking among themselves, and they talked about many different topics.

“What are you going to do once it’s over?”

“I’m traveling no matter what. We got into a strange situation when we visited Mirror Lake last time. This time, we should go and actually have fun,” Park Deok-Gu suggested.

“We’ll be busy handling the aftermath, but I want to travel as well. Especially to a romantic place.”

“I feel like it’s been a long time since I last volunteered…” Sun Hee-Young said.

“Let’s go together, Miss Hee-Young,” Elena suggested.

“I think that’ll be great, Miss Elena. By the way, how is Mr. Elias doing?” she asked.

“*Ah*, my brother has been busy since he has a lot of things to prepare, but…”

They were discussing someone I had actually forgotten.

“Miss Ye-Ri shouted it back then. She said… Dance of Enchantment,” Ahn Ki-Mo said.

“Do you remember what you said, Mister Ki-Mo? If I unsheathe this, you’ll die,” Kim Ye-Ri said.

Some were battling it out by talking about their embarrassing past.

“D-Do you remember what happened a long time ago, oppa? I-In the tutorial dungeon, we…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“Of course,” I answered.

“It happened, right? *Hehe*,” she giggled.

Others talked about the memories they had made together. There were a variety of topics, and soon, the mood became silly as everyone started to get drunk. They started talking about things they had already talked about, which I found pretty funny.

Jung Ha-Yan was a little drunk because she couldn't stop talking, while Sun Hee-Young kept talking to me. Elena and Yoo Ah-Young were talking about the other races, while Park Deok-Gu and Hwang Jung-Yeon were talking about traveling.

Han Sora and Lee Chang-Ryeol, who were from the same tutorial dungeon, were talking about how the other party members they had met during that time were doing at the moment.

Jung Ha-Yan also started talking about the tutorial dungeon.

Park Joong-Ki, Kim Mi-Young, and the other executive staffers arrived to join us, which made the scene even more chaotic. Park Lian seemed relaxed as she talked to Alps, the new guild member. I wasn’t sure about the identity of Jo Hye-Jin's conversation partner, but she was smiling while staring at her hand mirror.

'You’re not talking to Lee Ji-Hye, are you?'

My complicated thoughts came to a standstill, and I was having a good time.

Once the meeting was in full swing, Kim Hyun-Sung approached me and said, “Mr. Ki-Young… let’s go get some fresh air.”

Overall, the atmosphere wasn't bad, but he must've wanted to talk to his soulmate, who was going to face a great destiny together. Honestly, I didn't want to go outside because it was cold, but…

"…"

"…"

'Alright, I'll do it for you.'

This was one of the reasons I decided not to visit Kasugano Yuno today. I nodded, and we went to the balcony. The cold breeze brushed past me. The foreign light was falling not too far away from us, so it was difficult to tell whether it was day or night.

"…"

'Ah, shit. It's cold.'

"…"

"Aren't you tired?" Kim Hyun-Sung asked.

"Yes. I can feel my exhaustion being washed away because it's been a while since we've met," I answered.

"How's your condition…" he asked.

"I'm fine. It's progressing slower than I expected. For all I know, I may have completely recovered without realizing it," I replied.

"I really hope… that's the case," he said.

He was smiling bitterly, and I felt guilty because he looked as if he was telling me not to work too hard. My plan was to stabilize his mind by encouraging him to hang in there, and that we could overcome the upcoming crisis, so I was doing my best to build up to that moment, but…

'What's going on?'

The continent before me instantly changed without any warning.

What's going on?

'Is this… a hint as well?'

My brain couldn't quite grasp the abrupt change, but the continent in front of me was familiar. It was too early for sunset, but the sky had become dark red. I had seen this sight before. I saw this continent in Kim Hyun-Sung's subconscious world.

I soon saw a familiar figure, but it wasn't Kim Hyun-Sung.

The figure belonged to me, and I was wearing a black cloak while staring at the sky with an expression that looked eerily similar to Kim Hyun-Sung while he was looking up at the sunset every day.

I was looking up at the same sky as the sky I had seen at the time.

I wasn't sure if this was something else or if I was seeing this through Kasugano Yuno.

I had never really seen my ending in my past life, so I wasn't *that* familiar with this scene.

The black-cloaked me stretched his hand to the sky where the sun would no longer rise nor set.

Wasn't Kim Hyun-Sung all by himself? What the hell was I doing there?

'Shit. Is this fake?'

The black-cloaked me standing in the middle of the ruins while looking up at the sky clenched his fists powerfully.

And the world changed once more…

"Mr. Ki-Young, Mr. Ki-Young! Ki-Young… Mr. Ki-Young!" Kim Hyun-Sung shouted.

"…"

"Mr. Ki-Young… Ki-Young…" he mumbled.

Was this fake as well?

“…”

“…”

- Thanks.

Damn it. Was this fake, too?

- Altanus.

Lee Ki-Young, you traitorous piece of shit. Stop lying.

CHAPTER 688
LEE KI-YOUNG, YOU SCUMMY FRAUD (2)

I felt like I became a lunatic because I started thinking if I was actually going insane. I did hear Kim Hyun-Sung's voice beside me, but I couldn't really process what he was saying. When I pushed him lightly as if telling him that I was fine, I noticed him taking a step away from me.

"I… I think I'm kind of drunk," I said.

"Ki-Young…"

"I'm going to head to my room," I told him.

'I really feel like I'm going to go mad. Really… shit… '

"B-But… just… now…" Kim Hyun-Sung stuttered.

"I'm feeling kind of dizzy. I'm sorry, but I think it's best if I head back first," I said.

"I'll…"

"Enjoy the rest of the time here and wrap things up for me here, Mr. Hyun-Sung. Please let the guild members know that I left early," I instructed him.

"…"

"I'm really sorry," I added.

"It's… fine."

I couldn't tell what was real, and I finally realized why the likes of Jin Cheong, Ito Sota, the demon contractors, and people like Lee Seol-Ho had lost their minds.

Lee Ki-Young had to have dug a deep hole for them—a hole they couldn't get out of and started throwing dirt on top of them to bury them alive.

I couldn't help but recall how I had mocked those villains who had shouted along the lines of, *"Lee Ki-Young, you traitorous piece of shit! You bastard!"*

I finally realized that it was foolish of me to think that those villains were uncivilized beasts who had abandoned their humanity. I clicked my tongue at the thought that losing their minds was the price they had to pay in exchange for a contract.

I really thought that those villains' charismatic nature was just a facade of their true selves, but I couldn't have been more mistaken. I started thinking about it. There had to be a reason they were so worked up. They didn't lose their minds. I was convinced that they were just furious and couldn't hold it in, which made them appear like lunatics.

I was sure the puppets of those demons felt the same as me right now. I was sure they were frantically looking around to find out what was going on and discover the truth.

I was sure they thought of many possibilities, but they ended up discovering that everything they had experienced so far had been fabricated, so they became enraged and *lost* their minds in the process.

Their surroundings had changed without any warning, and I was sure they were looking around while thinking whether they had gone mad or were still sane.

I immediately went to my room after leaving Kim Hyun-Sung.

When I looked at myself in the mirror, I finally understood Lee Ji-Hye's words about how I was a walking totem of provocation.

'You dirty traitor.'

I wasn't sure if it was just me, but I looked even more wicked today. I wanted to break the window, like those protagonists in movies, but my fury died down when I imagined seeing glass fragments sticking out of my fist.

'Don't trust this bastard. Don't trust him, no matter what. Seriously. Traitor.'

As if backstabbing people wasn't enough, he had decided to backstab his own back.

I felt myself calming down; it seemed that imagining glass fragments sticking out of

my fist was effective.

I decided to think about the scenes I had witnessed until now.

'It was fake, right?'

It was possible that he had just randomly changed my surroundings.

'Why did he say thank you to Altanus?'

Many different possibilities popped into my mind, but I knew that the entire thing was like poison. I knew that I shouldn't take the bait, but I couldn't stop myself from taking it.

Honestly, it was none of my business whether Lee Ki-Young had survived until the end or not, but if he and Altanus were in some kind of relationship, then Kim Hyun-Sung's regression had to have been affected somehow.

I had no idea what Kim Hyun-Sung's words meant, so I couldn't help but be interested in it, but…

'This is a trap. That Lee Ki-Young bastard is a fraud.'

Obviously, it was highly likely that this was a trap.

He probably activated the trap card when his bet with Lucifer was coming to an end. The biggest proof was that I was being swayed right now. If Altanus and I actually had a close relationship, then he wouldn't have shown it to me just like that.

If my subconscious had shown me that vision earlier, then things would become a bit more complicated. Unfortunately, I had no time to consider that kind of variable.

'What if the bet itself is the trap?'

What if the thing Lee Ki-Young really wanted to hide was his memories of his past life rather than his bet with Lucifer?

'No, that's too far-fetched.'

What if he had shown me the truth, but he made it appear as though it was fake?

'That's too far-fetched as well. I can't let myself fall for it. This is what that traitor wants.'

I had to remain calm. It was important not to let myself be swayed like what had happened before the meeting started. Everything might get ruined if I were to pry excessively.

On top of that, I wasn't the type to force open a treasure chest.

I would take it out from time to time, but the crux of the matter here was that I didn't like losing what was mine. Basically, Lee Ki-Young had no reason to take it out first because he wasn't the type to show his cards first.

In addition, there was no way he would give me the treasure chest himself, even if he knew what I would think.

Of course, I knew that completely dismissing that possibility was a stupid thing to do, but digging into that possibility was something I could do after confirming my missing memories with Kasugano Yuno.

I immediately started walking. I wanted to take Jung Ha-Yan with me, but I didn't know what kind of conversation we were going to have, so I had no choice but to head to Kasugano Yuno by myself. More importantly, she had the answer.

'What is it?'

What was the secret that he wanted to hide despite causing all this trouble?

It was definitely not an ordinary secret.

'He's really making this a big deal.'

There were too many questionable things for me to just ignore.

After quickly grabbing the griffon's reins, the griffon flew into the sky, and all sorts of thoughts popped into my mind. However, every single thought that I was having at the moment was just a meaningless assumption, nothing more, nothing less.

'Shit, shit, shit.'

Honestly, I wasn’t sure if heading to Kasugano Yuno right now was the answer. The closer I was to her, the more nervous I felt. I thought about going back several times.

However, I couldn't help but nod when I saw Kasugano Yuno looking like she was expecting me to visit her. Clearly, she knew I was coming.

“…”

“…”

I was surprised because it had been quite a while since I last saw her. I was sure we had met recently, and the thought that my memories of that time had been completely erased confused me again.

‘What the hell is going on?’

Kasugano Yuno looked nervous as she looked at me quietly with her eyes closed. I couldn’t help but remain silent when I noticed that she wasn’t happy to see me.

‘Did I make a mistake coming here?’

Would I really lose the bet if I were to get my memories back? One question led to another, but I wasn't the type to compromise—no, it was more like I couldn't compromise.

Just as I was about to talk, Kasugano Yuno started talking first.

“You’re here.”

“…”

“…”

“I know you’ve been—"

“Yes, I’ve been waiting for you,” she interrupted.

‘It’s nice that I don’t need to explain myself.’

“If you’ve been waiting for me… it means you know why I came here,” I said.

“I do,” she answered.

‘This is nice, too.’

“However…” she paused.

“…”

“However, I don’t know about the bet you two have made or about other things. I’d like to tell you ahead of time that you won’t be able to find the answer you’re looking for through me,” she continued.

“I don’t need anything else. You just need to tell me what kind of conversation we had and what I’m hiding,” I told her.

“You… told me not to tell you the next time you visit…” she trailed off.

‘Of course I did.’

“You knew I can't go against your wishes,” she added.

‘That’s right as well.’

“What I can show you isn’t the answer,” she said.

‘I’ll be the one to decide that.’

“You also said that I should tell you not to get swayed after seeing this,” she said.

‘Why would I be swayed?’

“You told me repeatedly that I have to deliver this message to you,” she said.

‘So what is it?’

I couldn’t help but feel worried because she was beating around the bush.

‘You said that this isn't even the answer, so why beat around the bush?’

I tapped my thighs, and Kasugano Yuno’s eyes opened slowly.

Of course, I knew very well what was going to happen since this wasn't my first rodeo. Tears rolled down her glazed eyes, which was kind of scary, but I had no choice but to look straight into those eyes. I soon felt like I was getting sucked to somewhere else, and I saw the fragments of the scenes I wanted to hide from myself.

I was staring at an expansive battlefield.

'Rafael? How is this bastard moving?'

It seemed that making sure that he would stay alive had paid off. However, this probably wasn't the secret that I wanted to hide from myself. I was kind of nervous, but Rafael was fighting one of the angels, not Kim Hyun-Sung.

Soon, the scenery peeled away.

'Cha Hee-Ra?'

I saw Cha Hee-Ra as well. She was severely injured, but she was still swinging her greatsword and axe. I felt scared of her rather than worried about her when I saw that she was still capable of moving despite the numerous spears sticking out of her.

Actually, she looked like she was enjoying the battle rather than exhausted. As expected, I saw her smashing the angels apart while laughing out loud.

'Xenogyria.'

The golden dragon that had agreed to become allies with us showed me a scene one would only see in myths. I was satisfied because it meant that the meeting had gone well. A large golden breath resembling a pillar had engulfed the entire region.

'Jung Ha-Yan.'

It seemed Jung Ha-Yan had successfully overcome her wall. She cast her spells as if they had zero cooldown, and the spite in her eyes told me a lot about the firmness of her determination.

I couldn't see Ji-Hye noona or the other guild members, but I was sure that they were doing their part somewhere.

They looked completely different from when our chances were at a paltry ten

percent.

The continent was resisting the pigeons with all its might, and some pigeons were actually getting pushed to a corner. It was such a great sight that I couldn't really tell what the problem was. I tried my best to figure out what I was hiding from myself and which part of the battle was problematic, but I couldn't find anything.

I was actually happy because things were going as planned.

When I thought that perhaps Kasugano Yuno had made a mistake…

'What the… '

I saw an unbelievable scene. I saw myself in the middle of the battlefield.

'What the hell is that?'

The problem was that it was an incredulous scene. My expression was distorted, and I looked like a rag. Shockingly, I wasn't breathing at all. Soon, I saw Kim Hyun-Sung looking down at me from above with his black wings spread wide open.

"What the—Shit! D-Did I die?" I stuttered.

"…"

"Did Hyun-Sung… kill me?" I questioned.

"…"

"Why did… Hyun-Sung… kill me?" I asked.

CHAPTER 689
LEE KI-YOUNG, YOU SCUMMY FRAUD (3)

'Shit... shit... '

I went quiet.

"Why did… Hyun-Sung kill me…" I muttered unknowingly, but I didn't hear an answer. I kept rewinding the unbelievable scene until Kasugano Yuno's mana ran out, but what I had done wouldn't change the future.

It wasn't like I actually saw Kim Hyun-Sung killing me, but he was definitely an offender who had been caught red-handed. I finally understood the reason behind Kasugano Yuno's gloomy face and her urgent message.

"Shit…" I cursed.

She had determined that it was an urgent situation.

I had been working hard, and it seemed that Zone Five would remain standing due to my efforts, which was a great reward. However, if my death was the price to pay for that result, then I didn't even have to think about it.

I got suspicious that perhaps Kasugano Yuno had received a hint from the Lee Ki-Young of the past and had decided to show me fabrication information based on that, but the possibility was low.

She couldn't lie to me, so there was no way she had shown me fabricated scenes.

I looked at her as if I was demanding an explanation, and she spoke cautiously.
"You…"

"…"

"You said everything will go perfectly if things proceed according to the future you've seen," she said.

'I heard that before, but it feels like I'm hearing it for the first time. What kind of bullshit explanation is that? What's perfect about it when I'm going to die?'

"You declared that it must happen for us to win," she added.

'What the hell are you talking about, damn it?'

"You said the future you saw must happen without any deviations or errors," she said.

'Shit. Then are you telling me that I have to die?'

"That's why you didn't want yourself to find out about the future. You were really worried about variables popping up," he informed.

"Is that… really…"

"I also don't understand, but that's what you said. You said that if you really visited me, I should tell you that several times," she added.

'This is so bullshit. What the hell is going on?'

I was shocked, and I really couldn't understand it.

'Things were going really well.'

Our situation on that battlefield was great. Rafael was doing his part on the battlefield, even though he looked like he would remain in a vegetative state.

Xenogyria was also fighting with all her might. Jung Ha-Yan had destroyed her own wall, and I didn't really have to say anything about Cha Hee-Ra. Obviously, it wasn't just the named adventurers who were doing well. If I were asked about how the battle was going, I would say that we were pushing the enemies back rather than the other way around.

If I were to exaggerate a bit, I would say it was 55 against 45. There were inevitable sacrifices, but we were keeping up with the pigeons. It was the best possible result that mankind could achieve with the power in their hands.

Aside from my death scene, it was the ideal scene.

The butterfly effect was an idea that a small butterfly flapping its wings could cause a typhoon. Now that I thought about it, I thought I had done something to bring about my own downfall in the process that led the people of the continent, except me, to victory.

'Did I neglect Kim Hyun-Sung too much? Is that the reason, Hyun-Sung?'

I was so focused on others that I might have ignored Kim Hyun-Sung too many times. I focused on helping people become even stronger and overcome their walls, but I might have completely ignored Kim Hyun-Sung in the process.

Now that I thought about it, I rarely spent time with him.

Whenever he sent me a message, I would read it, but I wouldn't reply to him.

I rarely answered his calls because I was afraid that the call was going to last a long time. I wasn't outright ignoring him, but it was true that I had stopped taking care of him. I got worried that he had escaped Lee Ki-Young's warm and comfortable arms because Lucifer's touch had made him go crazy.

If that were the case, though—what was that bet all about?

'Is it this?'

It was highly likely that the bet was about whether Kim Hyun-Sung was going to kill me or not. I thought Kasugano Yuno would have hints, and she showed me those hints.

One thing I didn't understand was that the past Lee Ki-Young had described this as a victory, even though he had seen my death scene.

I thought perhaps that I would become a crazy bastard on the battlefield and shout, *"I'm going to die, but mankind is going to live. Mankind has won this war!"*

However, the possibility of it happening was low. It was close to zero—the possibility of Lee Ki-Young realizing something and making something happen while making himself appear as though he were a real angel was close to zero.

It was more convincing to say that I had bet that Kim Hyun-Sung would kill me.

Either way, I decided to organize the information that I had gathered so far.

1. Lucifer and Lee Ki-Young made some kind of bet.

2. Kim Hyun-Sung will kill Lee Ki-Young in the future.

3. Lee Ki-Young has declared that dying to Kim Hyun-Sung is the best ending.

4. Lee Ki-Young had placed his bet on Kim Hyun-Sung killing him.

5. Kim Hyun-Sung must kill Lee Ki-Young.

If these assumptions were correct, then there were two conclusions that could be drawn:

6-1. Lee Ki-Young has something reliable.

6-2. The bastard had become light itself after preaching about the light, and he decided to make the ultimate sacrifice for the continent.

My conclusions could end up being incorrect, but they had the highest chance of being true based on the information that I had gathered so far. If 6-1 ended up being true, then it meant Lee Ki-Young could actually be trusted, but… I still had my doubts.

I decided to send Kim Hyun-Sung a message. I was confident that it wasn't true, but I had to check if he had truly escaped my warm arms. As soon as I sent the message, I immediately received a reply, which removed all doubts in me.

I nodded with satisfaction at the bond between the regressor and Light Ki-Young.

If my third assumption was true, Kim Hyun-Sung had to stab me for me to win the bet. Could our lovely regressor even stab Light Ki-Young's pale belly? I didn't raise Kim Hyun-Sung to be that stupid. If anything, he would disembowel himself rather than me.

He would never betray the comrade who was carrying his burdens with him, and it was a fact that Lee Ki-Young knew before his memories were erased.

It was also possible that there weren't any bets at all, but I quickly dismissed the idea because the current situation had proven that the bet had happened. Still, the most

important part here was the process rather than the result.

I suddenly recalled seeing Lee Ki-Young of our past lives extending his hand toward the crimson sky and thanking Altanus.

'Is that it?'

The scene that I thought was fake could be a hint.

If I had to guide Kim Hyun-Sung into stabbing me, then there wouldn't be a scene more fitting than that.

'That might make him stab me… '

Kim Hyun-Sung would feel betrayed. After all, his brother, who had been carrying his burdens with him, was actually the one who had given him those burdens in the first place.

'It's a bit too much.'

The brother who had consoled and saved him was actually the one who had thrown him all the way to the bottom of hell. His brother was actually the one who had used a variety of vicious methods to kill his comrades, and he was actually the masked scum who had plunged the continent into chaos.

'Even I think that it's a bit… '

Kim Hyun-Sung would be overloaded with negative emotions.

He would definitely go crazy once he discovered the truth. He would be filled with a variety of disgusting emotions, and in the end, he would stab Lee Ki-Young. He would then fall into the abyss of despair. This was the bad ending.

For the sake of achieving the happy ending, I would have to lie and tell him that I was the masked scum all this while. I would have to tell him that I was involved in his regression and that I had been deceiving him all this while.

That was the only way for me to win the bet.

"Does that mean I can get help from Lucifer, or I can create a situation where it'll

make it easier for her to intervene?" I questioned.

"That's…"

"…"

"…"

"Have you… thought of something?" Kasugano Yuno asked.

"It's nothing. I was just talking to myself," I answered.

"But…"

"The chances are still low, but… I think I know why I told you not to tell me," I told her.

"Would it be okay… if I asked you why?" she asked cautiously.

"It's because I'll be suspicious. I'll question if my death is really the shortcut toward the happy ending and if I really need to throw the dice and bet on that. Actually, I'm questioning it at the moment," I answered.

'Who can guarantee that I'll win after getting stabbed by Kim Hyun-Sung? I don't even know if that's the bet.'

If I were mistaken, my death would be meaningless. And it would be all because I had believed in the past Lee Ki-Young.

"In the end, you won't experience a miserable end. I-I won't let that happen. I'm ready to sacrifice myself for you in this life as well," Kasugano Yuno said.

'You said that there can't be any errors or deviations… '

"No, you don't have to do that," I said.

I could run anytime I wanted. Escaping the future I had seen meant that I would lose my bet with Lucifer, but it was better than dying.

I could just make it so that Kim Hyun-Sung wouldn't stab me, and I could get onto

Noah's Ark sooner than I had planned and completely avoid the fight. If my probability of winning was low, I could just avoid provoking Kim Hyun-Sung.

He wouldn't stab me, and Lee Ki-Young would survive as always.

'I'm sure there's a penalty if the bet doesn't even start or if I lose the bet.'

However, survival was the priority here.

I tapped my thigh while thinking quietly, and Kasugano Yuno started crying again.

The scene she had seen had to be *that* shocking to her.

"You don't have to feel so sad since it's a future I can avoid. The continent will probably lose, but…" I paused.

"But…"

"I still think that it's worth a try," I told her.

I didn't enjoy gambling, but I wasn't dumb enough to avoid a game where my probability of winning was high.

If I could trust Lee Ki-Young before his memories were erased…

"It's worth throwing the dice," I said.

"Do you really…"

"I can't guarantee that I'll win, but I believe my chances are pretty high," I said.

Of course, it was still better to throw the dice with certainty.

"I know you're tired, but let's watch it one more time," I requested.

"…"

"I think it's best if I check once more to see if my assumption is correct. Let's check again and see if the future won't change even if I don't run away and end up throwing the dice," I added.

Kasugano Yuno nodded slowly.

I was kind of nervous, but the future didn't change.

Before he had erased his own memories, Lee Ki-Young had to have expected me to dig this deep without running away.

I finally found the answer.

I wasn't sure what kind of result Lee Ki-Young's death would bring, but I had to lie.

At the decisive moment, I had to confess and take Jin Cheong's sins upon myself—I had to confess to Kim Hyun-Sung that I was the masked scum and that I was involved in his regression.

I had to throw myself into hell.

The story of the tragic hero sacrificing himself for the world was a cliche commonly used in the 80s, but it didn't matter. Kim Hyun-Sung enjoyed that kind of cliche, after all.

'If my death can save the world… I'll sacrifice this useless body of mine, then.'

Hot tears of light started rolling down my cheeks.

CHAPTER 690
LEE KI-YOUNG, YOU SCUMMY FRAUD (4)

'Is it possible or not?'

[Activating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[I-It'll be impossible with the continent's current situation. I'm not allowed to directly interfere in the life and death of humans, and there will be a huge penalty, even if I receive permission to do so. It's an especially heavy penalty for gods like us. The smallest interference will also cost a ton of holy power… (0/1)]

'It's not like I don't understand your concerns here.'

[Activating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Thank you for your understanding… my junior, Lee Ki-Young. I knew you would understand. (0/1)]

'It's because I have an idea as to how things work up there.'

[Yeah. They've also invested a lot in the other continents, so I don't think they can afford to invest more here. Remember the time they filled you up with light? You can think of that as their final support. Anyway, you got wings, right?! Right? (0/1)]

'Are you sure it's impossible? If you gather a few gods like Elune and sacrifice them, then… '

[It's impossible even if we sacrifice Elune and a few gods. It might be possible with the holy power that the ancient gods had collected over an immeasurable amount of time. An ordinary human can probably use it, but you know that you're on a different level. (0/1)]

'That's true… '

[I'm sure this won't happen, but let's assume that we save you. That's no different

from bringing a dead god back to life. It's no different from bringing Altanus back to life. If we had enough holy power to do that, we wouldn't have allowed Altanus to die in the first place. As I've been telling you, the support we gave you last time was extremely rare. The gods had agreed because one of the higher-ups really wants to recruit you and Kim Hyun-Sung. If it weren't for them, that would've never happened. (0/1)]

'Hm… '

[I feel bad saying this to you, but as you already know, you kind of have a stupid—I mean, a unique side. There are many conservative gods up here, so they talk about you and Kim Hyun-Sung a lot… Like if we can even trust a corrupted human… (0/1)]

'What?'

[S-Still, the one I mentioned earlier… They said that it's for that reason that we should recruit you two. They focused on why you two had accepted that power rather than the fact that you accepted Lucifer's power. They really want to see you, but unfortunately… they're really busy right now. (0/1)]

'You said a lot, but you're basically saying that it's possible, right?'

[N-No. It's impossible. Violating the laws of the continent… (0/1)]

'It's possible if we use the ancient gods' holy power and face the penalty.'

[You're not wrong, but… it's difficult to move a clump of holy power of that size. It'll cause a lot of problems for the dimensions the higher-ups are in charge of, and if that much holy power is consumed, it might destroy the balance of the dimension… (0/1)]

'So you're saying that it's possible.'

[I-It is. (0/1)]

'That's all I needed to hear.'

I thought I would keep crying tears of light. Of course, I had decided to sacrifice everything for the light, but I needed some sort of confirmation.

I felt like the puzzle pieces were falling into place.

Lucifer could probably do it. Even if Light Ki-Young became light itself, Lucifer could still save Lee Ki-Young. She'd probably receive a huge penalty, and all her merits would probably go down the drain, but she would definitely save me.

Actually, Benigoa's words made me think of the possibility that I might not get involved in any situation where I would have to put my life on the line. Lucifer would probably interfere somehow in order to minimize the damage as much as possible.

I wasn't sure why I had made such an annoying bet, but if it was one of the conditions of the contract, then it made sense.

Demons could interfere in the real world only after getting into a contract. Demons on Lucifer's level could do it without a contract, but everyone knew that signing an official contract was a way to reduce the inevitable penalty.

Regardless, Lucifer would suffer a lot of damage if she ended up losing. I also got curious about the kind of penalty I would have to take if I ended up losing. What did Lee Ki-Young offer to make Lucifer intervene?

I couldn't help but get worried that I might have signed a slave contract that would make me bound to both Kim Hyun-Sung and Lucifer forever. Of course, I didn't really feel like investigating that because I would win the bet anyway.

[Activating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[There are exactly two days left. L-Lee Ki-Young. We can do it, right? (0/1)]

'I'm sure we can.'

[Activating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[I thought about what would happen if you abandon our continent, but… I-I'd expect nothing less from you. I trust you. Even if Elune doesn't believe in you, I've always believed in you. L-Let's stay together until the end. Okay? (0/1)]

'No… '

[The buying and selling together. I-I'll do that with you! (0/1)]

‘…’

[We’re soulmates. Yeah, I-I always believe in you. (0/1)]

‘…’

[Even when others cursed and pointed fingers at you, my faith in you remained strong. (0/1)]

‘…’

[*Ah!* I-It’s time for the meeting. Hang in there, Lee Ki-Young. I-I’ll do my best to find a way to help you. We’re one. We’re one! (0/1)]

“She sure is…”

I felt kind of nervous, but I felt hopeful as well.

‘It seemed like it was only yesterday when Benigoa was scared that I was going to abandon the continent thirty-six days later… ’

It felt like she was trying to confirm that I had decided to accept the situation. I thought perhaps watching out for people who could backstab me until the very end was the wisest thing to do, but I realized what Benigoa’s hopeful mood meant.

She probably thought the preparations were going smoothly. Benigoa’s confirmation was useless, but in her eyes, the continent probably seemed like it was heading toward a bright future one step at a time.

‘She’ll profit a lot from this as well.’

The greatest news for her was probably the high chance that she would get to keep her job, and the benefits that would come along with that job had probably put her in a great mood.

She would definitely get promoted, and she might even get a bonus for driving the Outer God away or even defeating it.

The outlook would become even brighter the moment I joined the fight. It seemed that the gods up above had varying opinions about Kim Hyun-Sung and I, but they

couldn't deny that we were a nuclear typhoon duo.

We had received the blessing of one of the higher-ups, so we had basically secured our spot up there. I was sure Benigoa would try to join us, and I started wondering if Benigoa had thought about all this beforehand.

I started tapping my thighs, but I heard a voice before me.

Now that I thought about it, we were playing Chess.

“It’s your turn, Sub Guild Master,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“…”

“…”

“*Ah*, looks like I’ve been spacing out,” I said.

“You can take your time. It’s not like we’re playing to see who’s better,” she said.

Jo Hye-Jin looked at me quietly.

“Who said we weren’t? We are playing to see who’s better,” I told her.

“If you say so,” she commented.

“…”

“…”

“Your skills have gotten worse since the last time we played,” I said.

“I think it’s more like you’re skilled at this game. You’re definitely good at this game,” she complimented.

‘She’s… ’

“*Ah*, try this tea,” she offered.

‘…’

“I heard it’s good for your health, and it especially helps clear your mind… They say that it's effective,” she informed.

“Where did you…”

“The people on Benigoa Net recommended it. I’m sure you’ll like it,” she said.

‘Wow… ’

Jo Hye-Jin looked really worried.

‘Looks like I’ve been too busy lately.’

It was to the point that Jo Hye-Jin was playing just to entertain me. I was wondering why she wasn’t feeling nervous. This wasn’t how she normally reacted whenever she was losing. She was smiling warmly despite the fact that I was about to checkmate her.

The fact that someone was worrying about me was exhilarating, but at the same time, it kind of hurt my pride. I thought I would be able to get a reaction from her if I made a provoking remark.

“The tea is delicious, but… the game is pretty… My skills haven’t improved. Your skills just got worse,” I said.

“…”

“This is too easy… Is there something wrong with you? You shouldn’t have made that move earlier. I can’t play with someone at this skill level…” I complained.

“…”

“I think you should practice more. Well, there are two days left until the war, so you’re definitely feeling nervous, but your skills have seriously gotten worse. Oh my gosh! Thanks for that. I never knew I could kill a knight with a pawn. *Wow*, this game is amazing,” I told her.

“…”

“It’s almost a checkmate… Should I do it or not? I’ll go easy on you just this once.

However, I'll take your bishop. Oh my gosh… this is nice. Are you having a hard time thinking about your next moves?" I questioned.

"…"

"This is too easy. I feel like I'm playing with Hyun-Sung. Really," I continued.

"You're taking it too far. I'm not as bad as the guild master," she said.

"Well, I feel like I'm playing with Hyun-Sung. Thank you for this guy as well. *Nom*," I said.

"…"

I noticed the look in her eyes changing as she bit her lips. I talked with a slightly serious face, but of course, Jo Hye-Jin's moves wouldn't change the course of the game. The game was already one-sided, and the only thing Jo Hye-Jin could do was to get beaten up.

"Oh, no, my hand slipped, and I ended up getting this piece," I said sarcastically.

"…""

"What am I thinking? *Hahahaha*." I laughed.

"…"

"Checkmate! Don't ask me to play chess with you again. Seriously," I told her.

"L-Let's play one more game," she requested.

"No thanks. It's already late," I declined.

"Let's play one more. One more game," she begged.

"It's obvious what's going to happen, and I'm not having fun. Ji-Hye, no, beat Miss Kim Mi-Young first. Then I'll play with you," I told her.

"Let's play one more game," she repeated.

“Stop begging. I don’t want to play again,” I declined.

“Just one…”

“I don’t want to because you’re so weak,” I complained.

“Play one more game with me! Just one more!” she shouted.

“…”

“…”

“I-I’m sorry for yelling,” Jo Hye-Jin stuttered.

“You don’t have to apologize. You’ve been losing all day, so it’s understandable,” I said.

“So, just one more game,” she requested.

“I’m seriously not going to play another game. Let’s clean up and drink some wine. I have things I need to talk to you about…” I instructed her.

“W-What is it?” she asked.

“How’s Hyun-Sung doing? Is he doing well?” I asked.

“I think so. I didn’t notice anything strange about him. He did seem kind of down today as I was leaving, but… other than that, he’s like his usual self. Now that I think about it, he asked me to see if there was something wrong with you. He said he can’t get in touch with you at all, and he actually wanted to come here with me, but…” she paused.

“Mr. Hyun-Sung is busy. I shouldn’t interfere,” I commented.

“That’s true, but…”

“How are things at the guild?” I asked.

“It’s fine. I think there’s a slight problem with Miss Ha-Yan, but…” she answered.

'So that's going well, too.'

It felt like there was really only one puzzle piece left.

"There's really…" I trailed off before continuing. "Not much time left…"

"Will it be okay?" she asked.

"It'll be fine," I replied.

"You seemed pretty nervous…" she pointed out.

"*That* problem has been taken care of. Preparations are going well, so I just hope things will go according to plan. The best-case scenario is ending this war with no casualties at all, but I'm honestly just hoping that all this will be easy for us," I said.

"No one will get hurt," Jo Hye-Jin said.

"Who knows… but yes, I really hope that no one gets hurt," I said.

Jo Hye-Jin bit her lips as if she noticed my anxiety. She looked like I had just thrown her a death flag. She looked as if she wanted to ask me something because she noticed that something was off.

However, she changed the subject while forcing herself to smile.

"B-By the way, what did you want to talk to me about?"

"I almost forgot the main topic," I said.

"…"

"I didn't want to talk about something so serious on your day off, but… I feel like it needs to be said. It's not a big deal. I just want to tell you that you have a new mission," I informed her.

"What are you—"

"I want you to follow the manual at the beginning of the battle," I instructed.

“At the beginning? What do you mean?”

“This is just a big what-if, so…” I warned her.

“Okay.”

My voice was shaking as I muttered, “So, if…”

“…”

“If I…” I paused.

“Yes?”

“If something bad happens to me, I want you to follow this manual,” I told her.

I handed her the document I had prepared for her, and I saw her biting her lips.

“This… T-This is…”

I had just shown her the document depicting the saint's willingness to sacrifice himself for the light.

She jumped out of her seat, and she staggered as if she was feeling dizzy. Her hands were shaking as if she couldn’t believe what she was seeing. Her eyes were filled with tears, and her lips fluttered close and open like a fish.

She seemed to be panicking, and the way she breathed in ragged pants shocked me more than her. I thought perhaps I had made a bad decision giving this quest to Jo Hye-Jin.

‘Ah… I think I chose the wrong person.’

“Lee Ki-Young… Lee Ki-Young… Lee Ki-Young… You…” Jo Hye-Jin mumbled.

“…”

“You…”

I tried to look as sad as possible. I had made many preparations, so I just needed to

go all out.

“I told you that this is just a what-if situation. This is just in case I die,” I reminded her.

CHAPTER 691
LEE KI-YOUNG, YOU SCUMMY FRAUD (5)

“What the hell are you saying right now?” Jo Hye-Jin asked.

“This is just a what-if situation. You're always overreacting. Can you stop?" I replied.

“So… So what are you… What kind of situation is this? W-Why are you…”

“We need someone to take care of things once the dust has settled. This isn’t some child play. The continent is in danger right now, and a huge battle that’s unlike anything we’ve experienced before is about to happen. We only have two days left,” I explained.

“…”

“Casualties will not be strange in such a huge battlefield. I think you might even die or one of the guild members might die. I also have a manual in case others die, so you don't have to overreact.

"Just think about the symbolic meaning Lee Ki-Young has on the continent. I don’t think I’m an amazing person, but I’m sure both the continent and the Blue Guild will become chaotic if I somehow end up dying.

"I need someone to fix things up by then,” I continued.

“I’m asking why you made this?!” she shouted.

‘Shit, Hye-Jin. Why are you so worked up? Do you want to become Doom Hye-Jin?’

“Why do you keep making me repeat myself? I told you this is just for a what-if situation,” I repeated.

“So this is the written instruction for this what-if situation you keep on mentioning? Stop it with the bullshit, you… you—”

"…"

"Are you planning on dying? A-Are you?" she questioned.

'Shit. Did I make it too detailed?'

Jo Hye-Jin's reaction was a lot worse than what I expected.

I was happy because she cared a lot about me, but I was more shocked than happy.

"Do you not know who I am? Do I look like someone willing to die?" I asked.

"Then… explain," she demanded.

"There's nothing for me to explain. I've told you everything, so just keep that in mind. Why are you acting like this?" I asked.

I seriously doubted if I had made the right decision by choosing Jo Hye-Jin.

'You told me not to taint my pride, Hye-Jin.'

Where did the Jo Hye-Jin who cared a lot about my pride go?

Why couldn't she see that her reaction was tainting Light Ki-Young's pride?

'Shit… bring that Jo Hye-Jin back!'

Jo Hye-Jin looked like she wasn't planning on backing down, which made me feel anxious. I had already decided to sacrifice everything for the light, and I was shocked by her reaction.

Was Jo Hye-Jin misunderstanding something here? Everyone was afraid to die, and it took me quite a while to decide about sacrificing myself for the people I love because I was also afraid of dying.

Jo Hye-Jin's reaction was just making things harder for me.

'Is she going to tell Kim Hyun-Sung?'

Jo Hye-Jin's gaze was more hostile than the gaze she used to stare at me during our

past lives. Her tears had yet to fall, but it was all because she was holding them back with all her might.

She was panicking, and I was sure she couldn't make the right decision because of that.

For some reason, she looked like I was going to make trouble or make some kind of extreme decision.

“Stop it with the bullshit. J-Just stop. I-I’ll pretend that I didn’t see this, so put it away,” Jo Hye-Jin requested.

‘You’re rebelling. You’re going against my order.’

I thought perhaps I should say something as her superior, but I didn’t think this was the time for that. She was definitely having negative thoughts because her breathing was becoming more and more ragged as the seconds went on.

“Don’t think about this ever again. You won’t die, Lee Ki-Young. You won't die no matter what,” she warned.

‘No, I need to die. Why are you acting like this?’

“Stop being silly and read it thoroughly,” I ordered.

“I said no,” she declined.

“…”

“I said… this is for a what-if situation,” I reminded her.

“I-I don’t believe you…” she stuttered.

‘She’s emotional.’

“How do you expect me to… to… believe you? All you do is lie… You’re… nothing but a liar,” she stammered as she started crying. I could hear her sobbing, but it seemed that she still hadn't realized that she was sobbing loudly.

Jo Hye-Jin wasn’t stupid, and it was unlike her to overreact and cry. She probably had

an idea about what was going to happen. She was aware of the great trial and terror that I needed to face and the sacrifice I had to make while carrying heavy burdens.

She knew what kind of a person I was, and she knew that I wasn't the type of person who would throw himself into this kind of situation for no reason at all. Of course, she was also aware that I wasn't the type of person to sacrifice myself for others.

It was only a matter of time before she found the answer.

It was kind of different from my intentions, but Jo Hye-Jin was probably thinking along the lines of this—*his memories aren't the only thing that's going to disappear this time. Lee Ki-Young himself is going to die and disappear. I think that's why he's so calm, and I think that's why he somehow managed to accept his fate. Yes, he has already accepted his fate, so he is no longer afraid.*

“Everything… you're… lying…” Jo Hye-Jin mumbled. It seemed that she already knew the answer. “So please take it. Take it back… I won’t believe… that lie. I don’t believe you… when you say that you’re fine."

“…”

“Take it. Take it! You scummy bastard. Take it back!” she shouted.

“…”

“Did you think I would like it if you gave me something like this? Y-You lying bastard. Is this why you wanted to see me today? You invited me to play chess with you so you can tell me this? Leisurely? You wanted to relax and play chess… *Heuk*… Is this why you wanted to play chess? You called me here to show me something like this?” she complained.

“You’re…”

“You piece of shit. You dirty bastard… Do you… Do you feel better now?!” she yelled.

“Hye-Jin…”

“Do you feel better now?! Do you really think you’ll become someone great… by pretending to bear all that weight by yourself? *Heuk...* Do you feel better by standing above everyone else and teasing us? Did you feel relieved seeing me laugh and

chattering away?!" she continued.

"…"

"Is this the type of person you are? Is this the best you can do? You're just going to give up? You said you weren't going to die. You said weren't going to die no matter what. You said you were confident in taking care of yourself… You said you were going to live until you were senile! You said you were going to live! Y-You bastard… *Heuk*… you bastard. You said that's the kind of life you were going to live," she said.

"…"

"You could've told us. We could've found another way if you had told us. You said you would help so that things would work out between Mr. Hyun-Sung and me. That was… That was all a lie. It was… all a lie," she said.

"…"

"You said we should go out and have fun once all this is over, that we should stay up and play chess while catching up, and that we should go shopping together. A-All of it was a lie… *Heuk*… you lied about everything!" she complained.

"I'm so—"

"Don't apologize. Don't apologize!" she interrupted.

"I'm sor—"

"I said don't apologize! *Heuk*… Don't apologize!!! You lying bastard!!! You bastard!!! *Heuk… heuk…* Don't apologize…" she yelled.

"Sorry…"

"Don't apologize," she repeated.

"Just calm—"

"Don't tell me to calm down, you bastard. You lying bastard…" she cursed.

"…"

“Tell me…” she said.

“About what…”

“Tell me when you made this plan. I want to know everything. Tell me how things are going and what exactly is the problem. I deserve to hear it. I-I deserve it. Tell me… exactly how much time you have left,” she demanded.

“…”

“I said tell me!” she repeated.

“So…”

“I’ll break that mouth of yours if you lie to me again,” Jo Hye-Jin threatened.

“I don’t know exactly…”

“…”

“*Whoo*…”

“…”

“…”

“It won’t take that long. I don’t know exactly when it’ll happen, but it’s not far. It hasn’t been that long since I discovered the symptoms and… I wasn’t trying to hide it. Would it help you understand if I told you that it hasn’t been that long since I found out?” I asked.

“…”

“I don’t know what’s going on either, but… this isn’t something that can be stopped. If there were a way, I would have already found it,” I told her.

“How… how can you say that?” she asked.

“…”

I slowly spread my wings of light. I started shining, and I emitted a vast amount of holy power. However, the light that had illuminated the dark room looked sadder than majestic… Yeah… the light looked *that* sad.

“So it's because of that…” Jo Hye-Jin stuttered.

I shook my head, and Jo Hye-Jin started crying again.

I didn’t need to explain it to her. It was highly possible that Lee Ki-Young’s fleshly body had perished a long time ago. I was sure that it wasn't that difficult to figure out. One just had to know the hardships my fleshly body had gone through, and one would easily understand what I was talking about.

My weak body had overcome several life-or-death crises. I was lucky enough to see sights that I wouldn't have seen during my lifetime if it weren't for my enthusiastic friends. I had also experienced many things with them. Now that I thought about it, some of them were exhausting, while some of those experiences were downright sad.

Regardless, I had fun, and they all made me even stronger.

Yes, this was the setting I had to go for. This would definitely work. My fleshly body had long reached its limits, and it had become so messed up to the point that it was a miracle that I had survived the 27th Legion incident.

There was also a time when I had to take powerful potions just to stay alive. I hadn't noticed it, but Lee Ki-Young was dying.

This fleshly body was being maintained by a holy power so great that a human body couldn't handle it. Goddess Benigoa took pity on the pitiful human and bought me enough time until everything was over—until I could finally put an end to all this.

“D-Don’t lie,” Jo Hye-Jin said.

“…”

“*Heuk… heuk…* Stop lying… Please… please tell me it’s all a lie,” she begged.

It’s not a lie.

“Please… I beg you. Tell me… it’s a lie. Please…” she repeated.

“It’s not a lie,” I told her.

I wanted to protect the continent—no, my people, so there was only truth in my eyes.

“*Heuk*… How… how…”

Honestly, the word *sacrifice* didn’t fit Lee Ki-young.

“It doesn’t fit you…” she commented.

However, I wanted to do something. If I were aware of the fact that the end was near, then this kind of ending wouldn’t be so bad.

“Let’s just say I’m giving back just as much as I received. I didn’t know I would have thoughts like this, but… since it already happened, I need to put an end to it,” I said.

“…”

“Who knows? Perhaps Goddess Benigoa might bring me back to life as a reward. Honestly, I wanted to abandon everything and run away, but I was afraid that the holy power maintaining this body of mine would get taken away if I were to go down that route.

"They're going to take it away, right? What do you think? The gods gave me holy power to save the continent, but I had decided to use it to run away. If I were a god, I would give myself divine punishment if I were to do that,” I explained.

“*Heuk*…”

“I’m doing this so that all of you can live, so don’t worry. I changed a little,” I told her.

“*Heuk… heuuuk…*”

“I wouldn’t have thought of doing this a long time ago. I would have ignored even the destruction of the continent, but a word suddenly popped into my head.

"Responsibility… I think you’re the one who planted that word into my head—the word responsibility. This is the responsibility of the group I’m affiliated with and

those who joined the group because of me. I'm not sure what to say; I'm not really used to this," I continued.

"*Heuk… heuuuk… Kgh*."

"It doesn't fit me, and I'm embarrassed to say this, but I'm proud of my decision. I think I have an idea as to what pride is now," I added.

"*Heuk… heuuuk…"*

"So…" I paused.

"*Heuk…"*

"Don't taint my pride," I continued.

"…"

"…"

"Lee Ki-Young… you scummy bastard…" she cursed.

"…"

"Lee Ki-Young… Lee Ki-Young… you scummy fraud… you… *heuk*…" she cursed again.

Jo Hye-Jin's sobbing that didn't fit the bright room began to echo.

"You fraud… *Heuk*… Traitor… *Heuk…* bastard…" she continued.

CHAPTER 692
LET'S PREPARE FOR THE END (1)

[You're seriously human trash. Seriously.]

[What's wrong, noona?]

[Do you really have to interfere like that? Does it bother you that much that Hye-Jin and I are hanging out together?]

[I don't know what you're talking about… *Ah!* But Hye-Jin did hang out with me until three in the morning yesterday.]

[You really shouldn't break our plans. We've been planning it for a while. Do you know how much effort I put into this so that we can go on vacation right before the war? Yesterday was my only day off, but you ruined that. Couldn't you have met her today? You didn't do that on purpose just to mess with me, right?]

[We even took pictures together, *hehehe*.]

[She's so upset that she won't even read my messages.]

- Lee Ki-Young has sent a picture.

[Isn't it a good picture? *Hehehe.*]

[Anyone can pretend that they have amnesia and are terminally ill. Just you, wait. I'll come up with something amazing as well.]

'What is she talking about?'

I clicked my tongue upon reading Lee Ji-Hye's message. She could only say that because she didn't see how Jo Hye-Jin looked yesterday. Actually, with her personality, she'd still go through with her plan.

[Sell me an anesthesia potion.]

[I only have enough for myself.]

[You said you were going to make more. You said you would keep improving it because you didn't want to feel even the slightest pain, so sell me one of those.]

[I'm using it because I really need it, but you're using it to cook up something.]

[You're cooking something up, too.]

[No, I really might die. I'm using it because I really need it, noona.]

[You're making it up, you fraud.]

'I'm not making it up, noona.'

I started getting mixed feelings because she didn't notice the will of the light that was about to sacrifice itself for mankind.

[I heard you called Yeon-Soo and the others. You also spent time with them.]

[Everyone gathered for this meeting, and Jo Hye-Jin had to be there as well…]

[It was for work. I wouldn't have said what I said earlier if I thought about you. Also, what do you mean I don't have work today? I need to prepare a speech soon and wrap up the issue with Ha-Yan. Do you really think that I'm in the Democratic Country for no reason? This is really important, and this isn't an easy task. I need to control my emotions because my emotions are crucial for this task.]

[I have plans afterward. I haven't received a reply yet but don't interfere with that plan either.]

[Why are you talking like that? Someone might think that I don't want you and Hye-Jin to get along.]

[It's true, though.]

'I told you that it's not.'

[Let me get in sync with my emotions. Noona, this is really important.]

I could tell that Lee Ji-Hye was angry through the hand mirror. She had mentioned that I was a control freak or whatever, but she was the true control freak here.

It kind of got on my nerves, but she sounded really disappointed about not being able to spend time with Jo Hye-Jin. Seeing that she was asking me for potions, it seemed like she was thinking about using extreme methods. Unfortunately, she couldn't possibly defeat the martyr Lee Ki-Young. Just the thought of leaving the people I loved behind by sacrificing myself for the continent honestly made me want to cry tears of light.

'I need to protect it.'

This beautiful land and its denizens.

Honestly, I was scared of dying, and I couldn't help but feel bitter at the thought that I was going to die soon. I had many things to prepare, such as powerful potions, and there were things I needed to take care of by myself. I felt like I finally understood why people needed alone time.

Anyway, I felt like I would soon see myself praying quietly to a goddess statue while bathing in the light.

'I need to make preparations.'

I needed to be ready to leave this world behind.

"Father Lee Ki-Young."

"Father Basel…"

"I hope I'm not interrupting your time with Goddess Benigoa," he said.

"Not at all," I told him.

"When I saw you from behind, you looked really sad. It's difficult to say this, and it's something I shouldn't say, but… you seemed like someone I'll never see again," he described.

"That's… not going to happen," I told him hesitantly.

I had to be more careful. I couldn't be too obvious about it because the people precious to me might get hurt.

“Yeah, of course, that won’t happen. Goddess Benigoa cherishes you so much… Yeah… it can’t be. Looks like I said some useless things…” he said.

“I’ll think of it as you being really worried about me, Father Basel,” I said.

“*Haha*. You always know what to say to make me feel better, but compared to when others say it, your words don't sound fake. I’m sure… you’ve never lied before, Father Lee Ki-Young,” he said.

“I’m only human, Father Basel,” I commented.

I smiled bitterly at his words because his words made me feel guilty.

I couldn't help but start doubting if it was really okay for me to deceive everyone.

Would laughing it off and telling everyone that I was okay and that there weren't any problems really help everyone? Wouldn't saying my last goodbye to everyone and bringing things to an end be the best ending?

However, I shook my head when I thought about the sadness they had to withstand.

It seemed that I still didn't have enough courage.

‘Lee Ki-Young… you coward.’

An unknown emotion made me start trembling the moment I imagined everyone looking as sad as Jo Hye-Jin. I was more than enough. The guild members were the main force, so if there were issues with their mental health, there would be issues with the continent’s stability. I had to be determined for everyone living on this land.

‘Don’t be scared, Ki-Young. Don’t be scared. You’re just doing what needs to be done.’

“You don’t look so good.” Father Basel pointed out.

“I’ve been having mixed feelings because I’ve been thinking about various things,” I told him.

“That’s understandable since it’s happening tomorrow. I’ve been comforting the followers by telling them that the goddess won’t abandon us, but they’re still afraid,” he explained.

“…”

“It’s so scary that people are panicking,” he added.

“Goddess Benigoa will always watch over you,” I told him.

“What would I do with her protection when I’m at the age when I can die at any moment? She can take me, but I hope she won't take you, Father Lee Ki-Young. I can’t leave the Vatican even in this upcoming war… This is the first time I’m feeling bitter about this old body of mine,” he complained.

“You don’t need to blame yourself like that. Look at everyone who had gathered at the Vatican. They all believe in you, Father Basel. I wouldn’t have been able to focus on this upcoming war if it hadn't been for you.

"Look at them again, Father Basel. Look at those who are praying. This is the final sanctuary. If the enemy takes over all the bases in the north, the only person these people can rely on is you. I’m sorry if I sound a bit arrogant, but you have to be more confident,” I told him.

“You’re right. I should do that… I was being weak… and said silly things again,” he mumbled.

“…”

“Let’s head down together, Father Lee Ki-Young,” he suggested.

“Okay.”

“What are you thinking about doing after the war?” he asked.

“I’m planning on spending time with my lover,” I replied.

“I see… that’s understandable. I’d expect nothing less,” he said.

“You’re embarrassing me,” I said.

“It’s nothing to be embarrassed about. You’ve been working hard for the continent all this time. It’s natural that you would want to spend time with the one you cherish. Did I make a silly request?” Father Basel asked.

“Not at all. I should’ve visited you sooner. The Democratic Country is my home and the place where my spirit can breathe. Comforting war refugees is something I should be doing as the honorary cardinal,” I answered.

“That’s the kind of person you are,” he commented.

I noticed him smiling quietly.

When we continued walking, I heard a loud noise made out of small voices that had gathered as one.

Refugees had already evacuated to the Vatican, and even if the Vatican were providing support, there were too many people for them to provide any decent support. I saw that everyone was afraid. The sight made me bite my lips and reaffirm my decision.

“Father Lee Ki-Young.”

“Please save the continent.”

“Father Lee Ki-Young…”

“Goddess Benigoa. Please watch over Father Lee Ki-Young…”

“Please look over the Democratic Country…”

“Please protect the Democratic Country.”

“Father Lee Ki-Young.”

“Loyal vassal of Goddess Benigoa.”

“Son of the Goddess. Please save us.”

It was scary. The responsibility and the burden weighing down on me were scaring me, but I couldn’t back down.

The holy knights were having a hard time controlling the crowd.

Under normal circumstances, a small child would break through the holy knight's cordon with incredible speed and luck. I recall there being a child who had done that last time, so I was kind of disappointed that it didn't happen this time.

'Shit. Who's in charge of the production? Is Ji-Hye noona pouting? Seriously?'

I bit my lips for a moment, but as expected…

"Get 'em!" someone shouted.

I happily looked at where the voice had come from and saw a group of holy knights as well as a boy trying to escape their grasp.

I didn't think that they could be considered a child because they looked like they had just turned 16 years old. The boy's movements were unusual, so he was probably pretty agile in the back alleys. The boy was dirty, and he was holding the rosary of the Democratic Country, which looked dirty as well.

'Oh my, you're cute.'

I smiled warmly at the boy who had appeared at the right time.

"It's fine," I said.

He wasn't an assassin. The boy, whose name was unknown to me, had simply run this way because he wanted to hand me the rosary in his hand.

"I'm sorry, Father Lee Ki-Young. We'll…"

"No, it's fine. Please help him come here," I ordered.

I was actually thankful that the new member of the holy knight was incompetent. I looked forward and saw the boy trying to catch his breath.

His voice was trembling as he said, "I-I really wanted to give this to you."

"Thank you," I said.

“I… really wanted… to give this… to you…” he repeated.

“I appreciate it,” I said.

“I… really…”

I wanted to express my gratitude properly, so I grabbed his dirty hands tightly.

The boy was taken aback, and he started trembling like an aspen tree. It seemed that he was afraid of getting punished for trespassing. However, his trembling figure and the tears that welled up in his eyes made him look even more pitiful to me.

A radiant light burst out. I wasn't completely aware of the boy's condition, but he had to have realized that he was suddenly filled with holy power.

“*Uh… uh…”* the boy stammered, but his reaction was understandable. I took the rosary and placed it around my neck. Actually, I think it would be more effective to ask him to put it around my neck.

“Will you put it around my neck?”

I lowered my head and looked into his eyes; the boy looked really nervous.

I couldn’t really describe his gaze because his eyes shone with a variety of emotions, such as fear, happiness, shock, and faith. This child would become one of the continent's leaders in the future, and he was the hope of the Sacred Democratic Country, as well as the future of mankind.

Lee Ki-Young was going to die for the sake of people like this young boy.

Lee Ki-Young wasn't going to die a meaningless death, and it wouldn't be a death full of regrets, but…

‘I do regret it.'

I felt regretful and disappointed at the thought that I wouldn’t be able to see this boy's future and the world this boy was going to live in.

“Thank you… very much. You gave me a lot of strength,” I said.

"*Uh… uh…*"

Did he see through the emotions in my eyes just like how I saw through his emotions?

"*Uh*… I'm… sorry. *Heuk*… I'm…"

The saint was trying to carry an immense burden by himself.

Did he… did he… perhaps notice it?

"I'm sorry… *Heuk*… I'm… sorry…" he cried.

I couldn't help but hug the boy because he was crying quietly.

"Thank you," I said.

I was really thankful for him.

"Hang in there. H-Hang in there. Win… no matter what," the boy said.

CHAPTER 693
LET'S PREPARE FOR THE END (2)

“Hang in there… Hang in there, Father Lee Ki-Young,” the boy said.

‘Yeah, I need to hang in there. But shit. I’m really scared.’

I was prepared, but I was still scared.

‘I wonder if it's going to hurt.’

Honestly, I didn't even want to think about it. I had an idea as to what was going to happen, but I couldn't really say for sure. The thought of meeting my end made me want to pick up the dice I had already thrown. Lee Ji-Hye snorted, saying that I was being emotional for no reason when I wasn’t actually dying, but I was sure that she wouldn’t be able to say that if she were in my shoes.

‘Am I actually going to die?’

The thought would pop into my head from time to time. If I had to give an example, it was like drinking poison. Even if there was someone who could feed me the antidote and there were people to stop me right before drinking the poison, how many people would be able to actually drink that poison?

‘Wow, it makes sense.’

Lee Ki-Young had decided to sacrifice himself and drink the poison with the intention of saving the continent.

‘Don’t waver, Ki-Young. You just need to take care of this task. That’s all.’

At this point, I didn’t mind being called the real hero of the continent.

Anyway, all preparations were complete, aside from helping Jung Ha-Yan overcome her wall, which I thought was the most important.

Since I had many things to do today, I wondered if I had spent my time wisely, but it wasn't bad at all. I had received help from the boy who had appeared from out of nowhere, and I was able to comfort the refugees. The face of the responsible saint, who was willing to sacrifice everything, was displayed on the Goddess' Mirror and the light inside me had helped me reaffirm my determination.

"You don't need to see me out, Father Basel," I said.

"*Haha*, it's fine, Father Lee Ki-Young. Are you heading out?" Father Basel asked.

"Yes, they should be here soon," I replied.

"O-O-Oppa," Jung Ha-Yan called out.

Jung Ha-Yan's low voice reached my ears. At first, it seemed like she was calling for me energetically, but she lowered the volume after noticing Father Basel next to me.

"I-I-I'm here," she said.

"I'll excuse myself," he said.

"…"

"Well then… good luck, Father Lee Ki-Young," Father Basel said.

"Good luck to you as well, Father Basel…" I said.

It wasn't a hopeful atmosphere, and Father Basel could have noticed an unknown sense of responsibility in my eyes. It was the same for Jung Ha-Yan, who had come here to pick me up. She looked upset because I was obviously anxious.

"Let's go," I said.

"Okay. N-Now…"

"Yeah, it's happening soon. How are you feeling, Ha-Yan?" I asked.

"I'm okay, and my c-condition is great as well. I-I think I can do well," she replied.

"That's a relief. I'm expecting a lot from you," I told her.

“R-Really?” she asked.

“Of course. I expect more from you than anyone else. You’ve been studying the manual, right?” I asked.

“Yes, o-of course. B-But… I-I think there’s something wrong with the manual. Something changed… The manual… is different from what I thought,” she replied.

“What?”

“*Ah!* I-It’s nothing. L-Let’s get going,” she stuttered.

“Thanks for everything,” I said.

The scenery peeled away, and I found myself standing in a familiar place. Jung Ha-Yan was staring at me, looking like she wanted to say something.

‘Looks like she’ll be saying something soon.’

I wanted to maintain light mode, but I came back to my senses after seeing her bothered face. I was sure she didn’t notice the martyred light in my eyes because I hid that light the moment I met Jung Ha-Yan.

She was probably more curious about Han Sora’s condition.

‘Ah… this worries me.’

I was starting to get scared of turning on the switch.

‘I really need her, though.’ I was worried that she was going to go in an unexpected direction this time as well, but I just nodded. *‘I’m going to die anyway.’*

There wouldn't be a battle to speak of if Jung Ha-Yan failed to overcome her wall. I was worried that an accident might happen, which was the reason I had been avoiding Jung Ha-Yan.

I wasn’t sure what kind of accident she was going to cause, so I needed to make sure that preparations were done before any accident could happen.

Fortunately, mankind was finally ready to withstand her explosions.

Jung Ha-Yan looked as if she really wanted to ask me questions. If possible, I wanted her to keep it in until the very last moment, but when I was about to get up, she mustered up her courage and spoke cautiously.

“O-Oppa.”

She seemed like she wanted to ask about the strange things that were happening to her recently. Obviously, she was curious about that *set-up* I had prepared with Han Sora.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Miss Sora, be ready (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

‘Should I stall a bit longer? If she explodes now, I won’t have time to give my speech.’

“Oppa…” Jung Ha-Yan called out.

“Ah, shit. I don’t think I’m ready yet… Is it okay to start now?’

“So…”

‘Ah, damn it. I really might have to die… Should I think about this a little longer?’

Many different thoughts popped up into my head.

Jung Ha-Yan wasn't aware of the fact that the prophesied day would start the moment I told her the truth. Once the secret was revealed, she’d definitely do something because she had always been like that.

It was none of my business, but she would definitely overreact toward what was happening to Han Sora right now.

“S-So, there’s something I need to tell you about Sora,” she said.

“Okay.”

“W-When I saw her… last time during the meeting, I felt a strange energy…” she continued.

The dice was thrown.

“A strange energy?” I asked.

“I can’t… really describe it… So… W-When I fought S-Sora, I-I felt a similar energy…” she answered.

“…”

“B-Back then, the energy was faint, so I couldn’t detect it… I-I’m not sure, but… I-I actually felt it… from your body as well… s-so I erased it,” she continued.

“W-What are you talking about?” I asked.

“I don’t think there’s anything wrong with your body…” she said.

“Can you tell me the details?” I asked.

I acted like it was a really serious problem, which made Jung Ha-Yan realize that her anxiety was becoming a reality because she looked kind of confused.

She was probably in the process of realizing that this wasn’t something we could just laugh off. I was sure she was already aware that if she thought a little deeper about it, this wasn’t some simple issue.

One day, a strange energy would enter Han Sora every day, and Jung Ha-Yan watched that strange energy grow as the days went on. She had vowed not to care about her traitorous friend, but how could she do that when we were about to fight a war?

It might be worth trying to figure out the mastermind behind the strange energy.

She would have told me that a long time ago, but the fact that she had told me rather than Han Sora was enough evidence of her abysmal communication skills.

Jung Ha-Yan was acting like she was confused because she had been turning a blind eye to it all this while.

'Did she look into it today as well?'

Jung Ha-Yan was curious about the large lump of what looked like cancerous growth inside Han Sora. She was also curious about why it was growing every day.

"T-There's… nothing wrong with your body… I-It's just strange. I just… found it strange… I thought… it was a buff… Park Mijin gave her… but… i-it keeps getting weirder," Jung Ha-Yan replied.

"What… are you saying right now?" I questioned.

Jung Ha-Yan's breathing became ragged. She looked like she was imagining something she didn't want to imagine, and she looked similar to the time when she first saw Doom Ki-Young.

Her eyes were quivering, and she started biting her nails. Perhaps it was because of my serious expression, but her eyes were filled with tears. I also took a deep breath. I knew that Jung Ha-Yan would panic, but she was panicking more than I expected.

"So… so… S-Sora might be… in trouble… The buff… Park Mijin gave… Park Mijin… did something to… S-Sora…" she stuttered.

Tears threatened to fall down Jung Ha-Yan's eyelids, and I took a moment to compose myself before speaking.

"Who's… Park Mijin?" I asked.

"…"

"…"

"What?"

"Who is… Park Mijin? Wasn't Miss Sora… always with you… all this time?" I asked.

"What? P-P-Park Mijin… the m-mage… Well, you… I'm sure you—What?" Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

"Who the hell… is Park Mijin?" I asked.

“C-Cha Hee-Ra… S-She beat her… s-so she was going to go on a mission… in my place…” she answered.

“How could Hee-Ra noona—Ha-Yan, did you not get the manual? No one is doing your mission for you. I-I don’t know what you’re talking about… Anyway, is Sora… Is she doing okay?” I asked.

“Park Mijin… *Huh?* P-Park Mijin… was definitely written here… I’m sure she was… she was here—What? She was definitely here… T-This can’t be…” she stuttered.

Jung Ha-Yan was confused and was wondering what was going on while holding her head in confusion. I could tell what she was thinking. She was wondering where it all went wrong and why this person named Park Mijin had disappeared.

Park Mijin definitely existed, even though only a small number of people—a few people, including myself, talked like she actually existed. Park Mijin had usurped Jung Ha-Yan's crown as the continent's strongest mage, so she definitely remembered Park Mijin.

If she had some context, it wouldn't be difficult for her to know the answer. However, she had no idea that I was suffering from amnesia, so Jung Ha-Yan could only reach one conclusion.

‘Park Mijin… erased Oppa’s memories.’

And the goal?

‘To harm him.’

However, Jung Ha-Yan protected Lee Ki-Young by erasing that strange lump of energy the moment she noticed it, which meant that she had avoided the worst-case scenario.

‘An outsider… ’

It didn’t take long for the puzzle pieces in Jung Ha-Yan’s head to fall into place, and she seemed aware of the fact that she was getting closer to the truth because she was trembling. The conclusion was made. Jung Ha-Yan had succeeded in getting rid of the lump of cancer inside Lee Ki-Young, but…

"…"

She couldn't get rid of the lump of cancer inside Han Sora.

"*Ah… ahh… ahhh… kgh… ahhh…*"

Jung Ha-Yan kept crying as her body continued shaking.

"*Ah… ah…* O-Oppa. O-Oppa… Oppa…" she called out.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"S-S-Sora… Sora…" she stuttered.

"Sora…"

"*Ahhh… ahhhhh… ack!*"

She was really fond of Han Sora because guilt slowly overwhelmed the confused Jung Ha-Yan.

At this point, I had to show that I had come to a realization. The war had started much earlier, and while mankind was preparing and putting its guard down, an outsider had unknowingly snuck in to attack mankind from behind.

'I should've been more cautious.'

I was lucky enough to avoid it, but Han Sora couldn't avoid it.

'You… dirty outsider… Dirty bastards.'

The war had started before it was scheduled to begin. They had made a complete fool out of us before we could even do something about it. Basically… it was a crushing defeat for Lee Ki-Young.

"*Aaahhh…!*"

I had no choice but to hold Jung Ha-Yan's hands tightly while she was falling apart.

CHAPTER 694
LET'S PREPARE FOR THE END (3)

Jung Ha-Yan's hands were trembling. Her eyes were filled with regret, and I could tell what she was thinking. However, she wouldn't be able to do anything here other than scream and break down. She was breaking down so fast that no one would say that she was perfectly capable of making the right decisions right now.

'Han Sora… Is Han Sora okay?'

I was surprised as well, but calming down Jung Ha-Yan was a priority. It was difficult to remain calm because I thought one of us had to remain sane. If I ended up in a similar state as her, then…

'We would be playing right into those bastards' hands.'

Those bastards would definitely be happy to see our mental faculties collapse.

Their plan was to make mankind lose their will to fight as one, and attacking us from the inside was the method they had chosen. I wasn't sure why they had gone this far and why they used this kind of method to threaten the continent. I also didn't know why Han Sora was so unlucky.

However, I soon found the answers to my questions. Their ultimate target was…

'Me.'

They were trying to get me through Park Mijin, not Han Sora. In some ways—no, she got caught up in all this because of my incompetence.

'Did I not grow stronger?'

I thought I had become even stronger because I had experienced many things, but it turned out that I was still on square one.

This was the same method I had used to take down Ito Sota, Jin Cheong, and many

others who had decided to abandon their humanity and work with the demons…

Lee Ki-Young was still on square one.

I had vowed to protect the continent and its denizens, but I was nothing more than an idiot who couldn't even protect one person. Guilt started weighing down on my shoulders, and my legs were shaking to the point that I felt like collapsing, but I couldn't do that. My determination to no longer lose any of my comrades made me stand rooted.

Yeah, this was great. This emotion should be enough.

'Ha-Yan… shit.'

The problem was Jung Ha-Yan. She was screaming and was speaking in tongues. I was worried if she could even see properly because she was crying so much. She had to have forgotten that she needed to go to Han Sora right now.

Actually, she wasn't in the condition to cast spells.

'Ah… is showing Han Sora the right move here?'

Jung Ha-Yan had to step forward, but it was like she had taken five steps backward instead. It was possible that she wasn't courageous enough to go see Han Sora. Her trembling body seemed to be telling me that she was afraid. Jung Ha-Yan was afraid of facing the result that she had created by ignoring and pushing away her friend.

She was afraid of witnessing the worst-case scenario born from her mistake.

Lowering my head and looking straight at Jung Ha-Yan was the only thing I could do.

'Don't break down.'

Everything would get ruined if she were to break down here, so I had to say something.

"It's not too late."

"…"

“Ha-Yan,” I called out.

“…”

“It’s not your fault,” I said.

“…”

“I’m sure everything will be fine,” I continued.

“…”

“Are you going to keep standing around here like this?” I questioned.

“*Uh… uh…*”

“Wake up. You have to go see Miss Sora,” I told her.

“Sora… S-S-Sora… Sora…” she mumbled.

“She’s still alive,” I said.

“*Ah…* S-Sora…” she stuttered.

“I’m sure… I’m sure she’s still alive,” I added.

Han Sora was still alive. Jung Ha-Yan came back to her senses, and she started wiping her tears away. She was thinking about casting a spell, but she had a hard time casting it. This was unlike Jung Ha-Yan, and I soon realized that she’d either plummet or skyrocket from here.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[We’re heading there now. She’s casting her spell, so get ready. (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

‘If this ends up failing, I’ll just have to bail.’

I'd probably tell Max to prepare Noah's Ark.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[N-No… No… Lee Ki-Young. You're not… You're not being serious, right? (0/1)]

Unfortunately, I was serious.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Is there anything I can do? I-I… (0/1)]

This was already out of Benigoa's hands.

'Ah, shit. Maybe I shouldn't have given this task to Han Sora.'

I couldn't help but doubt if she had even made her preparations. Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan was already channeling her Teleport. Her channeling kept on getting interrupted, even though she was perfectly capable of channeling the spell in an instant.

I started to feel nervous, and I regretted not giving her the fine details of her role. I also regretted not coaching her on her dialogue. At this point, I had no choice but to trust Han Sora. Fortunately, it was an easy task.

She just had to act like she was dying, and I would take care of the rest.

'Don't disappoint me, Sora.'

Jung Ha-Yan's Teleport was cast, and the scenery around me peeled away.

However, I had to turn away for a moment when we saw Han Sora.

"…"

"…"

'What the hell? What's with her taste?'

I told her to pay great attention to her mise-en-scène because quality was really

important, but this was a bit too much.

'What the… Damn. Is this even possible?'

I wasn't sure where she had gotten this idea from, but I could clearly see that she had chosen black mage as the theme. I was also a bit emo sometimes, so this teenage-like vibe didn't really feel repulsive to me.

However, this was just too much.

'Is she crazy? How did she even pull this off? Shit, I hope Ha-Yan hasn't caught on.'

Han Sora's room was filled with a strange light, and it was going exactly like I had planned. However, I didn't tell her to hang on the tree of strange light as if she was nailed to a cross.

The only silver lining here was that the mise-en-scène was of great quality.

Her entire body was shining because of the strange energy, so it looked like she was gradually getting consumed by the tree.

The branch of the tree seemed to be digging into Han Sora's body because her face and the back of her hand looked uneven. Actually, it looked like a strange tree had sprouted from inside Han Sora and had burst out of her stomach.

The dirty outsider had planted a wicked seed inside Han Sora.

It made sense if I were to interpret it that way.

'Ah… looking at this… '

She looked pretty cool, and I could see what Han Sora was going for with this.

'Still… '

It was too much. The mise-en-scène was a bit excessive.

If I could, I would have turned Han Sora into Doom Sora. If I had the opportunity to do so, I would definitely put on a tear-jerking performance with Doom Sora, but a big event like that required excellent acting skills.

And that was exactly the reason I didn't have that much expectations from Han Sora…

It was better to create a small, meaningful event.

However, Han Sora had just exacerbated the issue by doing something like this.

'What the hell? Damn it. Why did it become so problematic?'

Naturally, I started spacing out because I had planned on spending a certain amount on the production cost, but Han Sora had done a lot more than what I had planned. I wanted to applaud her for her high-quality mise-en-scène, but the actress herself wasn't a trustworthy actor.

I also had no idea how to take control of this kind of story.

How did she…

'How did she even do this in the first place?'

It wasn't made with Han Sora's black magic, and the energy didn't feel like it belonged to Sun Hee-Young. I got nervous at the thought that perhaps the outsider had come in here, but I quickly found the answer to my question.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Lee Ki-Young! Is this enough? (0/1)]

The problem was that the goddess had intervened for some reason.

'Damn it. What do you mean, is this enough?'

I was wondering why Han Sora looked so unnatural.

She was also shocked by the changes to her body. She was doing as she was told since that was the best choice for her to make, but I was sure that she was really scared to suddenly see a tree protruding from her stomach.

To make matters worse, she was hanging from that tree, so she couldn't really move.

She couldn't hear Benigoa's voice, so she was definitely confused about what was going on… Obviously, she was scared that she was going to get killed without realizing it. Wait, if Benigoa had so much holy power that she could intervene in a tiny event like this, then…

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[It's fake! Fake! Father Lee Ki-Young! I-I didn't use a lot of holy power… (0/1)]

I honestly didn't know anymore.

Jung Ha-Yan had participated in Park Deok-Gu's hidden camera prank, so she had first-hand experience when it came to something like this. I wondered if she'd start having doubts after seeing Han Sora.

I glanced nervously at Jung Ha-Yan, and that was when she started bawling.

"S-Sora… Is that you, Sora?!" Jung Ha-Yan asked in disbelief, looking like she couldn't quite believe what she was looking at.

"Sora… Is that you, Sora?!" she asked again.

The figure was barely breathing.

Jung Ha-Yan was questioning if the figure before her was really Han Sora.

"O-Oppa… that's not Sora, right? That's… Sora… *Kgh*… That's not Sora, right? Right? Sora… *Heuk… heuuk…*" she cried.

"…"

"Miss… Jung… Ha… Yan…" Han Sora called out weakly.

"…"

"…"

"*Uh…*"

"Jung… Ha-Yan…" she mumbled.

“She’s alive. S-She’s still alive! She’s alive!” she shouted.

“Miss…”

“I-I can save you,” Jung Ha-Yan said.

“…”

“I-I-I’ll save you. I can save you. W-Wait for me. Wait for me. S-So… *Heuk…* I’ll… take you out from there. T-That will resolve everything. That’s what I have to do. I’m glad. O-Oppa, she’s still alive. *Heuk… kgh…* I’m glad. *Hiccup*… I’m really glad… *Heuk…* thank you. Thank god,” she cried.

“…”

“*Heuung… ahhhhh…* Sora. Wait. W-Wait for me…” she stuttered.

‘You mean she fell for this?’

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[I-I made the right choice. (0/1)]

‘She actually fell for it?’

I could only attribute this to beginner's luck.

“*Heung… heuuung…* I-I’ll save you… right now. *Hiccup*…”

Jung Ha-Yan was thrilled. Han Sora was still alive, so she probably thought that getting Han Sora out of that tree was the only thing she needed to do to return to her happy life.

She looked like she was thinking a few steps ahead.

Her legs were trembling, but it made sense because she suddenly felt relief, even though she was extremely nervous just a few seconds ago.

Jung Ha-Yan broke out into a smile as she rushed toward Han Sora.

Unfortunately, it wouldn't be that easy…

Jung Ha-Yan stopped moving upon hearing Han Sora's words.

“Run…”

“…”

“Run. You’ll be… in danger… if you stay here,” Han Sora warned.

She was right. The bomb inside Han Sora would soon explode. The Jung Ha-Yan of our past lives had experienced the same thing as Han Sora when her body was used as one of the materials for a bomb.

At this point, I thought it would be best if I said something.

“It’s too late.”

CHAPTER 695
LET'S PREPARE FOR THE END (4)

Han Sora smiled bitterly, and Jung Ha-Yan looked as if she was asking what I was talking about. I felt horrible as well, but someone had to say something.

“We’re too late,” I said.

“W-We’re not late,” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“…”

“W-We’re not late. S-She’s still alive. Sora… Sora is still alive, oppa,” she continued.

“…”

“We’re not late, right? R-Right?” she questioned.

“…”

I tried to talk again, but my voice wouldn’t come out, and I couldn’t help but bite my lips because I didn’t want to believe that this was real. I told myself that I wouldn’t cry no matter what, but Han Sora's figure started to look blurry in my watery eyes.

I cried because her resolve had reached me.

As expected, she moved her mouth weakly as if she made up her mind.

“I’m… okay.”

“W-W-What are you talking about? What… *Heuk*… What are you saying…” Jung Ha-Yan cried.

“You have to… get away… as far as you can. It’s getting harder to… suppress it…” Han Sora warned.

“S-S-Stop saying weird things. You always said… you believed in me, right? I-I can save you, so just w-wait a bit longer. Sora. Y-You said… I was a g-genius, so just wait a little. It’ll be solved easily. Yeah,” she told her.

“Yeah. You’re… a genius, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. You're the chosen one,” she said.

“Yeah, s-s-so I can save you, Sora. I can get you out from there. Just hang on a little longer… and I’ll get you out. I-I’m a genius. A genius,” she repeated.

“I’m sure you can do it, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I-I’m sure… you can do it,” she encouraged her.

“Yeah… I can do it. I can do it,” she said.

Jung Ha-Yan was quickly analyzing Han Sora, and if a motor was attached to her head, I was sure I would hear an ear-piercing noise. I wasn’t sure if she was trying to start her research right there and then to try and save Han Sora, but there was no way she had enough time.

She had ten to twenty minutes at most. This room would explode once the time was up, and it would blow away a chunk of the continent with it. I admired Han Sora's superhuman will and resilience. After all, she couldn't have done this without those.

“I can do it. Yeah… I can do it. This is easy. I can do it,” Jung Ha-Yan mumbled.

“You… You have to stop it,” Han Sora informed.

“*Huh?*”

“I’m sure you can stop it since you’re a genius, Miss Jung Ha-Yan,” she said.

“Wait…”

“You have to stop it,” she repeated.

“Op… pa?” she called out quietly.

I didn’t want to tell her this, but I had to.

"This room will soon explode and blow everything away,” I said.

“Lies…” she mumbled.

“…”

“You’re lying. *Heuk…* Lies… Lies… *Heuk… kgh…”* Jung Ha-Yan cried.

Jung Ha-Yan seemed to have somewhat expected it, even though she was crying. It made sense because the strange energy was still growing even while we were talking to each other.

Benigoa had told me that it was fake, but I couldn't look away from the trembling and flashing light that seemed like it was about to explode any time soon. It looked like the wick of the bomb that would soon light it up.

If the outsider's plan were simply to kill Han Sora, they wouldn’t have employed such a complicated method. The unprecedented scene we were staring at right now was the reason the outsider had planted a wicked seed inside Han Sora.

“You can do it, Miss Jung Ha-Yan,” Han Sora encouraged.

“I-I can’t…” Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

“You must do it,” she urged.

“I-I can’t. *Heuk… heuung… kgh…* Oppa. O-Oppa please do something. P-Please save Sora. Save Sora. *Heuuung…”* she begged.

I was angry as well, but I couldn’t think of another way. Obviously, there were other ways to deal with this, but the issue was if Jung Ha-Yan could overcome this.

“Please save her. *Kgh…* please, please…” she repeated.

It was better to do something rather than do nothing and lose Han Sora.

“Seal,” I said.

“What?”

“It should be possible if you seal it,” I instructed her.

“A s-seal?” she stuttered.

“If you can seal it, we may be able to find a way later. If you can use a spell that can completely stop the time in this room, we might be able to save Sora. If you can get rid of the spell, it’s highly likely that the strange energy inside Sora will disappear as well,” I explained.

“…”

“Of course, I’m not certain, and this is close to gambling, but it’ll most likely work. It’s better than watching her explode like this. At least… At least she’ll stay alive.” I continued.

“What?” Han Sora asked, not Jung Ha-Yan.

‘Ah, I must’ve forgotten to tell her this part.’

It seemed that I had forgotten to tell her about this part.

[Creating an Average-rank Forced Quest.]

[Rip through the seal once the war is over. I’ll give you special treatment and exclude you from the apocalypse★ (0/1)]

[An Average-rank quest has been delivered to Han Sora. No quest rewards were declared, so Player Han Sora will not receive a reward.]

Han Sora looked at me as if she was questioning what I was talking about and was telling me to stop talking nonsense, but this was the only way to save her.

She obviously didn’t want to get sealed, and I was sure she was thinking that it would be better to sacrifice herself.

She seemed worried about what would happen if the seal were to fail, and I couldn’t help but think that Han Sora had changed as well. She was basically saying that there wasn’t a need to throw a dice for the continent and Jung Ha-Yan.

Meanwhile, Jung Ha-Yan nodded slowly, seemingly accepting the situation.

She nodded as the tears in her eyes continued to roll down her face.

“Think you can do it?” I asked.

“I-I have to do it,” Jung Ha-Yan replied.

She knew that this was the only way to save Han Sora.

“It won’t be easy,” I warned her.

“I still… need to do it,” she said.

Because it was the only way to save Han Sora…

“*Heuk… heuuuk…”* she cried.

“Miss… Jung Ha-Yan?” Han Sora called out.

“I’ll do my best, Sora. I’ll… give it… everything I got. *Kgh…”* she mumbled.

“What?”

“I-I'll kill the culprit. I can… kill them for you. I’ll seal you… so that you won’t explode and stay in that form forever… *kgh*…” she told her.

“A-Are you…”

“I-I’m sorry, Sora,” she apologized.

“*Huh?*”

“I’m sorry… *kgh…* I’m really sorry,” she repeated.

“*Ah…”*

“I’m sorry for ignoring you… I-I’m sorry for… acting like a brat… I-I’m sorry for not thanking you. I’m sorry… for acting how I wanted… by pushing you away… kicking you out using magic. It wasn’t your fault, and I’m sorry for blaming you. I’m really sorry for not apologizing first. I’m sorry for ignoring you. I’m sorry for ignoring you…

"*Sniff! Hiccup!* I-I-It’s my fault. I-It’s my fault… that you’re in this mess. *Heuk…* I-It’s my fault. I’m sorry, I’m sorry… I’m really, really sorry,” Jung Ha-Yan rambled.

"*Uh… Huh? Uh… uh… Heuk…* It's okay. *Heuk…* It's not… your fault…" Han Sora mumbled.

"I'm sorry. I-I-I'm really sorry, Sora. *Heung… heuuuuuung…"* she cried.

"I'm sorry as well. I-I'm… *Heuk…* really sorry. I'm really sorry for getting mad at you over trivial things. I'm really sorry for not contacting you and treating you properly. I'm really sorry," she apologized.

"*Heuuung…* Sora. Sora," Jung Ha-Yan called out.

"I'm sorry. I'm… really sorry," she repeated.

"You've done nothing wrong, Sora… *Kgh…* You're not at fault," she said.

"I'm sorry…" Han Sora said.

"I'm really sorry… Forgive me… *Heuk…* You'll forgive me, right?" Jung Ha-Yan asked.

"It's nothing for you to apologize for, and… it was… just a misunderstanding. I'm glad we managed to work out the misunderstanding.

"You don't have to apologize anymore. You've apologized enough, so lift your head and show me your smiling face. Smile," Han Sora requested.

"*Heh… hehe… Kgh… hehehe…"* Jung Ha-Yan giggled.

"Yeah, just like that," she said.

"*Hehe… Heuk… hehehe… Kgh…"*

"Please smile," she said.

"Yeah… I'm smiling. I-I'm smiling… I'll keep smiling. I'm… going to keep smiling," she stuttered.

"I-I'm… honestly scared, Miss Jung Ha-Yan. I'm…"

"It won't hurt. I-I'll make sure nothing happens. W-When you wake up from your sleep, e-everything will be back to normal like nothing had ever happened. Y-You

trust me, right? Right?" she asked.

"…"

"I'm a genius, so I can do it. Like that. J-Just… J-J-Just like thaaaaaaaat!!!" she screamed.

Booooooooooom!!

A thunderous boom echoed as a terrifying burst of mana erupted from Jung Ha-Yan.

Perhaps it was because of the amount of mana she had mustered, but Jung Ha-Yan was somehow floating in the air. The mana she had unleashed was lifting her up, creating an unbelievable sight. I wasn't sure what kind of spell she was channeling, but she was looking straight at Han Sora.

"I'm scared. I'm scared. *Heuk…* Miss Jung Ha-Yan, I'm scared!" Han Sora exclaimed.

"Don't be scared. I-I'll take care of everything," Jung Ha-Yan told her.

"*Heuk… heuk… Ahhhhhhhhh!!!* Miss Jung Ha-Yan… Miss Jung Ha-Yan!" she screamed.

The strange light from inside Han Sora erupted, and Han Sora had to have been caught off guard because she screamed unconsciously.

Jung Ha-Yan bit her lips upon realizing that the situation was far more serious than she initially thought.

She was trying to seal the light that was pouring out of Han Sora using her mana, but it wasn't working out. The fake light of god had to have been influenced by her magic because it slowly pervaded the room.

"*Uhhh…* Miss Jung Ha-Yan! Miss Jung Ha-Yan! I think it's going to explode. I-It looks like it's really going to explode! *Heuuung…"* Han Sora cried out.

'Han Sora's acting is amazing. Ah, shit. Maybe we should've done Doom Sora.'

"*Ah… Aaaaah!* I can do it…" Jung Ha-Yan muttered…

'Yeah, you can do it.'

“I can do it!” she shouted.

‘Of course you can do it, damn it.’

Sealing the entire room was the only way to deal with that light…

“*Ahh! Ahhhhh!*” she screamed.

‘Shit. She’s really doing it. Our Ha-Yan is actually doing it.’

I couldn't quite describe how she was dismantling the untouchable power of a goddess using her mana as a mere mortal.

‘God?’

The space in front of us came to a halt. The world became monochrome along with the strange light. I wasn’t sure whether this was all because Jung Ha-Yan had simply cast a sealing spell or if she had actually stopped time, but it was probably the former.

“*Eeeeek! Eek!*” Jung Ha-Yan screamed.

However, her spell was slowly fading away. She was really determined, but it had to be incredibly difficult for her to maintain the monochrome world because its original colors slowly returned.

Jung Ha-Yan was both frustrated and anxious as she cried, and she was probably telling herself that she couldn't do this. She was probably telling herself that she had reached her limits and that she wasn't a genius at all.

Jung Ha-Yan stared deeply at the confused Han Sora, and then she looked at me, whose expression was grim as I stared at the unfolding scene. It was then that he realized that I would die along with Han Sora if she failed to seal the strange light.

‘Can she overcome it?’

I could see a sense of responsibility in her eyes, and it was a responsibility to protect us at all costs. She probably thought that I would help her somehow, but Jung Ha-Yan had to handle this crisis by herself.

I pretended to help her by moving around because it was awkward to just stand there and watch. I stretched my hand out and unleashed a large amount of holy power.

"*Aaaahhhhhhh!*" Jung Ha-Yan screamed as she poured everything she had to protect Han Sora and the continent.

"O-Oppa!" Jung Ha-Yan called out.

"You can do it, Ha-Yan," I said.

'You're a genius. I'm sure you can overcome this.'

"I believe in you," I added.

"…"

"…"

"Okay."

"Miss Jung Ha-Yan… Miss Jung Ha-Yan!! I-I…!" Han Sora shouted.

"*Aaaaaahhhhhh!*" Jung Ha-Yan screamed.

BOOM!

A powerful wave of mana swept across the entire room.

"I did it… *Heh… hehe. Kgh…* Sora… I did it, Sora," Jung Ha-Yan muttered weakly. She smiled as tears streamed down her face while staring at Han Sora, who was completely frozen with her mouth wide open.

Obviously, Han Sora didn't respond to her.

"I-I'll save you no matter what! I'll… take you out of there soon," she said.

The final battle against the Outer God was nigh, but the guild's one and only black mage as well as my hardworking precious friend already had to throw in the towel.

CHAPTER 696
LET'S PREPARE FOR THE END (5)

I couldn't shake off the shock that I felt at losing the comrade before the war even started. The tears on Han Sora's shocked face told me that she was extremely scared. I wanted to face her properly, but I couldn't do it.

Jung Ha-Yan was staring at her quietly. Clearly, Jung Ha-Yan had decided to face and accept the pain that I couldn't quite accept just yet.

'Did she overcome her wall? She did, right?'

I was sure she had flawlessly overcome her all. It was only for a moment, but Jung Ha-Yan looked like a goddess. I tightened my fist because she looked as if she had grown both mentally and as a mage. Unlike my expectation that she would throw a fit, she placed her hand on the tree as if she were making a vow. Her eyes were still filled with tears, but she looked like she had taken a step up the stairs instead of falling down.

For a moment, I was worried that she had exhausted all of her mana, but I clicked my tongue when I saw her mana recovery rate. She was like a power plant; Jung Ha-Yan's mana was recovering so fast that I could see it with my naked eye.

'How is this possible?'

I had no idea, but it wouldn't be strange if I started questioning if she was even human.

'At this level… '

I wasn't certain, but at her current level, she might be stronger than Jung Ha-Yan in the past. Not only that…

'Is she stronger than Hyun-Sung?'

I couldn't really say who was more powerful between them because they had

different jobs, but no one would deny the fact that Jung Ha-Yan could do so much more than Kim Hyun-Sung because she was a mage.

I suddenly became scared. If Jung Ha-Yan went rampant in her current condition, no one would be able to stop her. If she kicked up a fuss, I guarantee that not even Kim Hyun-Sung would be able to stop her.

Of course, the situation itself was reassuring because Jung Ha-Yan had changed. Thanks to the touching scene, she even overcame her mental barriers. Despite that, I was bothered by how she was looking up quietly, so in the end, I quietly moved to her side and examined her reaction.

She was forcing herself to smile, but she was having a hard time hiding the emptiness she felt because it appeared on her visage.

It was understandable since she had just lost the person whom she considered one of the most precious people to her.

Obviously, Han Sora wasn't dead yet, but she was frozen. I was having a hard time keeping myself together as well. I found it really hard to look at my sealed comrade.

"I-It'll be okay, oppa," Jung Ha-Yan said.

She grabbed my hand tightly and comforted me.

"…"

"S-So you don't have to cry," she added.

It seemed that I had been crying without realizing it.

"I-I-It's not your fault," she stuttered.

Jung Ha-Yan started looking blurry as she raised her hand and wiped my tears.

'She's become really admirable.'

She had changed a lot. She had matured so much that the various plans I had made in case she decided to throw a fit were no longer useful. Who would look at her and think that she was the same Jung Ha-Yan that we all knew?

I cared about Han Sora, but I cared more about Jung Ha-Yan, so I was happy about these changes. Actually, it was better for me to comfort her, but seeing her tiptoeing and using her tiny hand to wipe my tears caused me to cry again.

Our Ha-Yan had changed.

'She really changed a lot.'

"I-I can fix it all," Jung Ha-Yan said.

'Yeah, you should deal with all of this. Get rid of the Outer God and… get Sora back.'

"I'm going to fix it all. I-I'm going to get Sora back," she continued.

'Of course… I know you can do it, Ha-Yan. I'm sure.'

"She's not dead yet. Sora is here with us," she added.

'Wow, were you really thinking that far ahead? I'm proud of you, Ha-Yan.'

"I'm sure it's hard for Sora as well, but… she said she can endure it," she said.

'Yeah. You can endure it as well, right?'

"So… d-don't cry. I-I'll… I'll…" she paused.

'Yeah, I won't cry.'

"K-K-K-Kill them all," she stuttered.

'Yeah, you should kill them all.'

"I'll kill… kill… kill all of them that caused this. Yes, I-I'll kill them all. I-I'll make them feel unimaginable and terrible pain… until they die… and I'll kill them again and again," she said.

'Yeah, killing them… killing them is fine… '

"I-I-I'm going to make them feel pain so that they'll regret living in this world. T-That's the only path to atonement. I-I made a decision," she informed.

'What kind of decision?'

"I'm n-n-no longer… going to let others take things from me… I-I won't just stand by and watch like an idiot. Don't worry, oppa. I'll protect you. I can do it. With the power that Sora gave me… I-I'll kill all the dirty bastards that block our path," she explained.

'Huh?'

"T-The idiots trying to invade our home, *hehe*… I'll kill them all by crushing their heads. S-Show them this is what they'll become if they mess with us. R-Right, Sora?" she questioned.

'What the… '

"S-Sora said she wants to do that as well," she stuttered.

'Shit, what's going on? What the hell, Han Sora? You're not actually inside Jung Ha-Yan, are you? Shit, if you are, get out of there right now.'

"S-Sora said she'll do that as well. S-She said she'll help me," she said.

'So where's Sora?'

"A-A-A-Also, Sora… Sora…" Jung Ha-Yan paused.

"…"

"S-She said to get revenge no matter what. She said to… find all the b-bastards that made her like this… and k-kill them all. O-Okay, Sora. Y-You can trust me. I-I can do it all. Y-You said I was a genius. Yeah. I-I can do it," she mumbled to herself.

'Shit, get out of Ha-Yan's body. You demon, get out!'

I was seriously wondering if Han Sora's soul, which had been wrongfully sealed away, had somehow managed to make its way into Jung Ha-Yan.

I wondered if she was casting curses on the corrupted Benigoa. I couldn't help but think that way because Jung Ha-Yan looked as if she was actually talking to Han Sora, but of course, it didn't take me long to realize that she was just delusional.

“I-It’s all over? *Huh? Huh?* Y-You want to come live with us? Y-You can’t… The home belongs to oppa and me… Y-You agreed to live next door to us. Y-You want to live in the room next to ours?

"It won’t be that different from you living in the house… next to us? T-Then I’ll ask o-oppa once it’s over. He’ll… probably agree since h-he… likes you as well. Yeah… b-but don’t take back… what you said later, o-okay? I-I’m mustering up courage… to ask him,” she said.

“…”

It seemed Han Sora was going to live with us once we got married. I wasn’t sure if that was what Han Sora *actually* wanted, but I assumed that it wasn't the case.

“L-Let’s talk about it later. I-I can’t… ask him now. W-We need to hurry and get your body. So… Yeah… Let’s think about it later. *Hehe*… Right? It’s not scary, right? It didn’t… hurt, right?” she questioned.

“…”

I noticed her gaze changing. I knew Jung Ha-Yan tended to talk to herself whenever she was out of her mind, but I didn't expect Han Sora’s soul to enter her.

I realized just then that Han Sora's sealing plan was a bit too much for her to accept.

‘No, damn it. At least I got what I wanted. H-Ha-Yan awakened.’

However, the outcome was a tad bit too scary.

“I-I’m smiling, Sora. *Hehe*… I-I’m smiling. You told me I should smile… So don’t be scared… You’ll… You’ll return soon. Yeah…” she continued.

Was Han Sora’s corrupted, vengeful soul uttering words of curses to Jung Ha-Yan?

“I-I’ll kill them all. Y-You can keep your eyes closed. I-I’ll get r-revenge for you. *Hehe… hehehe…”* she laughed.

Shit, what do I do?

‘Is it… better to leave her alone?’

Does she remember the manual?

I wanted to applaud her for the part where she was sharpening her knife of revenge toward the Outer God bastard, but I was getting nervous about the possibility of her acting out unexpectedly during the war. Wouldn't it be better to return Han Sora to her original form and calm Jung Ha-Yan down?

'Just like that?'

Obviously, it was nearly impossible, and it was more beneficial to continue this tension.

When I thought about why this event kept on getting pushed back, I immediately found the answer. In addition, Jung Ha-Yan acting out unexpectedly was something within my expectations.

I saw Jung Ha-Yan mumbling to herself. Based on her behavior patterns, she was probably preparing herself to cause trouble. She tightened her grip around her staff. Her eyes were shaking, and rage was causing her lips to shake. She was forcing herself to smile, and she was staring at an unknown place with eyes filled with resentment.

'She's going to explode.'

It would be advantageous to us, though.

"That's right, Ha-Yan. We need to… get Sora back," I said.

"Yes… we're getting S-S-Sora back. S-Sora said she wants to return to her body as soon as possible. She said to find the b-bastard that made her this way… and b-burn them… with the great fire of hell. Forever… forever…" Jung Ha-Yan stuttered.

"…"

"…"

"C-Can you wait a moment?" I asked.

"Okay. I'll… stay… with Sora. I-I'll make preparations… and p-prepare to kill the evil bastard," she said.

“And the manual?” I asked.

“*Ah… ah…* W-What was it… *Ah!* S-Sora said… she remembers it. G-Go ahead… oppa. You can go. I-I’ll stay here… and get ready,” she told me.

“…”

As soon as I left the room, I noticed several people around me and Miss Kim Mi-Young, who was waiting for me, stood out the most. She had to have noticed my tears first because she was startled, but she managed to remain calm.

“Sub Guild Master,” Kim Mi-Young greeted.

“Get ready, Miss Kim Mi-Young,” I instructed.

“What…”

“It won’t take long. Go to the briefing room and get ready to transmit the video to the continent. They’ll be here soon,” I ordered.

“Okay. Inside the room…”

“Miss Sora… she has been sealed,” I told her.

“What?”

“From now on, don’t let people inside that room and keep this place under control. Ha-Yan will soon come out of the room. You don’t need to stop her; just let her do whatever she wants,” I instructed.

“Okay. I’ll instruct the others,” she said.

“Let’s move,” I said.

“Okay.”

I had to keep watching Jung Ha-Yan. She continued mumbling while looking at Han Sora with a blank stare, and seeing her talk with the frozen Han Sora gave me goosebumps. She lifted herself into the air slightly and smiled while grabbing Han Sora’s outstretched hand.

- You can overcome this. I-I'm here with you.

I was starting to feel frightened when Jung Ha-Yan bent her neck in an abnormal way, but I felt better if I thought of this scene as touching more than creepy.

It wouldn't be scary if one were to imagine Han Sora hovering around Jung Ha-Yan even after being sealed and the archmage desperately trying her best to save Han Sora. It was kind of scary, but it was definitely a touching scene.

- It won't take long. W-W-Wait for me just a bit… *Heh… kgh… he… hehe*. You can wait, right?

Han Sora's last words had to have been carved into her mind because the way she smiled while crying was touching enough to make viewers cry.

- *Hehe… hehehe…*

I had to move a little faster. I thought she would be able to endure for a few hours, but I didn't have a lot of time.

After standing at the podium, I immediately looked forward.

I wasn't fully prepared, but I calmly cleared my throat.

I glanced at Jung Ha-Yan through the Telescope, and I immediately lowered my head because she was still holding Han Sora's hand. I felt responsible for not being able to protect a precious comrade.

I held back my tears and calmed down my unstable emotions. As I suppressed the feeling of fear, pressure, guilt, incompetence, and rage towards the Outer God inside me, I started talking cautiously.

"Today, we… we lost a valuable comrade."

CHAPTER 697
LET'S PREPARE FOR THE END (6)

My voice instantly swept across the continent. Everyone was probably looking up at the giant Goddess' Mirrors installed everywhere. I could tell without using my Telescope. The timing was a bit sudden, and since I was giving my speech much sooner than scheduled, I was sure that many people were confused.

The staff around me couldn't hide their surprise either.

Light Ki-Young was filled with so much light that describing me as holy wasn't enough. For a moment, I was worried that I looked a bit scruffy, but the light looked like it was carrying all the pain in the world, which was great because I didn't have to prepare.

'It's better not to put makeup on to make me look more sickly. I look more natural that way, too.'

My lips spoke with firm determination while my eyes showed that I was never going to back down. I was sure everyone knew that the prophesied day was nigh.

I used the Telescope and looked around slowly. I noticed crowds gathering beneath Goddess' Mirrors. Everyone looked up at the sky quietly and was preparing for the approaching day of the prophecy. After pausing for a moment, I continued talking.

"We… We lost a valuable comrade," I repeated.

"…"

"I'm sure many of you feel the same way as I do. I believe everyone living on this continent has lost someone dear to them. I know you all lost people because of the demon worshiper, the demon summoner, the demon commanders and their subordinates, to war, pain, hatred, and rage." I continued.

"…"

“We survived. We're alive on the continent that our comrades, friends, and lovers had protected. Thanks to their blood and sacrifice, we survived and are enjoying the trees that they planted as well as the clean air they had sacrificed their lives for,” I said.

“…”

“That’s right. We're not the only ones who made the continent into what it is today. The heroes, warriors, adventurers, and even those living difficult lives were the ones who made the continent into what it is today.

“…”

“This land we’re standing on is our history and home. There’s no difference between the people of this continent, foreigners, and beings of other races. Those precious to us had shed blood for our future, and they sacrificed themselves so we could come here. They said goodbye with smiles,” I said.

“…”

“It’s thanks to their sacrifice. It’s because all of them were with us that we made it this far. They unified us. The ones who aren’t here with us right now had unified us when the Republic, Democratic Country, Union of Kingdoms, the Federation, and the neutral countries still thought of each other as enemies,” I continued.

The people nodded slowly, and the soldiers of the Republic and the Democratic Country were looking at each other. Just a few years ago, they called each other enemies, but now, they were patting each other’s back with a slightly awkward expression.

It was a great sight.

“It’s thanks to their sacrifice, and it’s thanks to their sacrifice that we’re able to prepare for the battle against the powerful enemy and for the prophesied day. They made us strong. Their death and sacrifice had caused us a lot of suffering, but they made us stronger at the same time,” I added.

Those who had lost a comrade nodded, and they began to remember their former comrades who died on a desolate battlefield.

A priest who had sacrificed themselves for the party, a warrior who had faced enemies to buy their comrades time to escape, and a swordsman who had gotten hit with a fatal arrow to protect their comrade's back.

There were many stories, and even though I didn't know every one of their stories, it happened pretty often on the continent. The people mourned for their comrades by either hitting each other's shields or swords or placing a hand on their chest.

I did the same.

'Song Jung-Wook of the Small Stone Guild.'

I suddenly remembered the man who had perished for his comrades at the front line during the monster wave at Castle Rock. We weren't close friends or comrades, but his will to protect Castle Rock was genuine.

'Heroes of the Federation.'

During the Belial summoning incident, people had sacrificed themselves at the front line to send the force led by Kim Hyun-Sung to Rimoura's nest. There were also heroes who bravely stepped up to fight Donovan despite their fragility.

'Han Sora.'

She probably felt the same way as those heroes. After all, she had allowed herself to get sealed. Aside from her, I was sure there were many unsung heroes out there. I could still remember many warriors brave enough to go to the most dangerous parts of the battlefield despite knowing that they would most likely die.

I felt grateful to them. Their efforts had allowed the continent to exist for so long.

"It's thanks to their sacrifice. It's also because of them that we learned what's truly valuable and what path we must take. Their actions showed us what's right and wrong, and that's why I'm able to talk about the truth. The lessons and stories are the lamps leading us to the right path," I said.

"…"

"Of course, I'm sure there are many who disagree with me, and there are definitely people who have made the wrong choice by selling their souls to demons. However,

we had learned from them as well. Those who had made the mistake of choosing the wrong side had taught us a lot as well. The continent's history made us stronger," I continued.

"…"

"So… So here we are! We're standing on this continent. We've overcome death many times, even from less threatening enemies, and we've grown stronger until we're finally here," I added.

"…"

"We—who could once be swayed by the temptations and desires of countless demons—are now standing here, firmly reflecting on our beliefs and values," I said.

"…"

"We—who once trembled in fear and terror—are now standing here with the courage and indomitable will those people had given us," I said.

"…"

I didn't know how effective my words were, and I was sure that they were still scared.

Regardless, I was sure those emotions would be helpful to them.

Those who were going to fight had to pull themselves together one more time, and those who were scared had to get rid of that fear.

When I looked around, I noticed that the soldiers trembling in fear weren't trembling as much anymore. People started believing that they could do it and that they could win.

Fear was contagious, but hope and courage was as contagious as fear.

"We—who didn't know what freedom and hope was—are now facing the final battle with hope in our hearts," I continued.

Of course, I was certain that not everyone necessarily agreed with me.

“We must show them. We must show our comrades, lovers, and families who helped us come this far that we’ve grown really strong. We must show them that we only managed to get this far because of their sacrifice and efforts. We must try our best so that their sacrifice and legacy won’t be in vain. Rise up and prepare for battle,” I said.

The soldiers assigned to the advance bases started moving. They grabbed their weapons and lowered their helmets. The scenes in the other regions weren’t all that different from each other. Some were stroking their arrows, and I saw warriors patting the backs of the comrades whom they were going to fight with. The leaders were encouraging the officers, and the priests were praying fervently.

They were preparing to die for the continent. I could see it in eyes filled with conviction.

They all had different thoughts, but they all wanted to fight for the continent.

I had to look at the others to see if they were ready.

- This is fun.

Cha Hee-Ra was smiling. She equipped herself with random armor that was on the ground and held her weapon tightly. She had already awakened, so she was overfilled with confidence as she opened the large door in front of her. The vast battlefield where she'd fight unfolded before her eyes.

As she looked down at the stage that was prepared just for her, she mumbled.

- I can become stronger.

Cha Hee-Ra nodded.

I turned my head again and saw Lee Ji-Hye.

- You could’ve at least told me. Oppa, follow the schedule and if there are any changes, at least tell me. Well, it doesn’t really matter what happens, but… this feels refreshing, thinking that this is just the beginning. It feels like we came far, but when you think about it, that’s not even true, is it?

Lee Ji-Hye was looking out the window while holding her cup. I couldn’t really describe her expression. I couldn’t tell if she was thinking this was finally the end or

if this was the beginning, but she seemed to be looking forward to it.

- *Ah*, if it comes to the point where you'll proceed with the Noah's Ark plan, don't leave me behind. I'm telling you this just in case. Seriously.

Oscar wasn't far from where I was. She was staring at the Goddess' Mirror. Eventually, she looked down at the countless soldiers behind her and showed them her steel-like determination.

- I'm Oscar. I'm… Oscar.

The troublemaker Park Deok-Gu looked kind of nervous as well.

Ahn Ki-Mo was staring at the battlefield quietly, and Kim Ye-Ri was patting Park Deok-Gu's back.

- Do you think I can…

- You can do it. Mister. You did well. Up until now.

- She's right. I'm sure you'll do well. You always told us that.

- I know. Every day. You mumble the same thing. If hyung-nim can do it.

- I-I can do it even better.

- Yeah. That.

Park Deok-Gu smiled. As if the slight doubt in his heart was resolved, he repeated the words someone had once told him and beat his chest.

Sun Hee-Young didn't seem nervous. She was praying quietly with another priest as if she was just doing her job.

- I hope… we'll win.

Elena was really scared, but she seemed to have made up her mind.

- Elune… Elune. Please look down and watch over us. The future of the races—no, please give me the power to protect this continent.

Yoo Ah-Young was spending time with Lee Chang-Ryeol by organizing the weapons.

The mysterious Lee Chang-Ryeol was patting the head of the new guild member, who looked confused.

I could still see people who had yet to overcome their fears.

Meanwhile, Rafael was still unconscious, and it seemed like he wouldn't wake up in time.

Jo Hye-Jin was wiping her tears quietly while staring at the mirror. I doubted if she was even in the condition to fight, but she grabbed the spear that was lying on one side of the room and went out.

- I can protect it.

I wasn't sure if she'd obtain the thing she really wanted, and Kasugano Yuno was in a similar situation. She was looking at something while crying continuously. She was probably in the process of checking to see if the future had changed.

However, the fact that she hadn't stopped crying meant that there weren't many changes. Oscar said it wasn't a fight for them to sacrifice their lives, but someone had to sacrifice for the continent.

- Please… please…

Jung Ha-Yan slowly stood up. She grabbed Han Sora's hand before standing up with a smile and leaving the dark room.

- Let's go, Sora.

I heard her casting a spell. I could see her slowly mustering her mana while looking at the giant light.

I had an idea as to what everyone was thinking. They were probably trying to pull that door that was opening slowly. Obviously, I had no reason to stop them because mankind was ready to fight.

The army of light had to pull that trigger, not those demons.

I slowly turned my head again and saw a man looking like he was having mixed feelings. I saw Kim Hyun-Sung staring at the hand mirror in a dark room.

It was hard to tell what the dark red-eyed guy was thinking.

- Responsibility.

I couldn't tell if he was feeling a sense of responsibility or if he was trying to get rid of that feeling. He spread his black wings and placed his sword at his waist. He walked outside, and I soon heard a lot of noises.

- Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle! All soldiers, prepare for battle! Prepare for the final battle!

Kim Hyun-Sung nodded when someone shouted.

- This is a fight to protect the continent! No one's death will be in vain. We'll be victorious. Remember what we're fighting for.

Kim Hyun-Sung took another step forward when one of the leaders started shouting.

- This is a fight for the continent. This is a fight for the goddess who's watching over us!

As Kim Hyun-Sung stared at the pillar of light that looked like it was about to explode, it seemed that he had decided to put an end to his beginning and end.

The soldiers were ready to die, the priests were praying to the goddess, and the heroes and frightened child soldiers were doing their best in their respective positions. The warriors turned around and looked at what they needed to protect.

The voices continued to grow louder.

While staring at the crowding humans, Kim Hyun-Sung muttered.

- There's the saying…

'Huh?'

- Screw you.

'No… don't say that. What's… wrong with you, man? Why are you suddenly trying to turn into Doom Hyun-Sung again?'

CHAPTER 698
PROTECT THE CONTINENT, HOLY ARMY OF LIGHT (1)

'Shit, I heard wrong just now, right?'

My emotions were almost swayed. If I hadn't been thinking about sad thoughts, I would've jumped out of my seat unknowingly and made a mistake live. I was worried that Kim Hyun-Sung was going to turn into Doom Hyun-Sung.

'What the? It was such a touching scene. What's wrong? What's the problem? Shit.'

I started thinking that perhaps I hadn't been checking in on Kim Hyun-Sung as much as I was supposed to do.

'Ha… shit… How am I supposed to check in on him? I've been so busy.'

I was too busy fighting Lee Ki-Young that was inside me and I had other things I needed to handle. Of course, I did somewhat keep my distance from him, but showing affection and caring for him at this point was pointless. Kim Hyun-Sung had to stab me with his sword anyway, so there wasn't a need for me to get closer to him.

Despite that, I wondered if I had ignored a signal that Kim Hyun-Sung had sent to me in desperation. Did I ignore the rescue signal he had sent before doing something unexpected? It was a possibility.

He hadn't really said anything else aside from that line, but his bloodshot eyes were cold.

'No, Hyun-Sung. Don't become corrupted and turn into Doom Hyun-Sung.'

I thought it would be best for me to invite him to Dr. Ki-Young's mental clinic and give him lessons tailored to him.

I thought we were fully prepared, but I had inadvertently forgotten the most

important part of the plan. Kim Hyun-Sung looked so unstable that I had to seriously think about whether we should delay the battle for a few hours or not.

He was wielding his sword with a self-deprecating smile, and I had a feeling that he was going to cause trouble.

'I need to invite him to the mental clinic, but the problem is that I can't stop it.'

- S-Sora… w-wait for me. *Hehe… hehe.* I-I'll kill them all. I'll kill all of them.

'Ha-Yan, damn it. Hold on. I think something is wrong here.'

- It'll open soon. It'll open. I-I'm going to hide behind that door there. T-The idiot who made you this way… I'm going to hide… It's going to open. S-See? You see that, Sora? I-It's opening! It's opening!

I had no way of stopping Jung Ha-Yan, who had unleashed her mana to lure the Outer God.

'I need Ji-Hye noona to do something.'

- All right… let's start packing. Yeon-Soo, did you check to make sure nothing is missing in our luggage?

- I did, unni! But are we really running away?

- You think we're pretending to run away? Keep an eye out so you can see when Noah's Ark is about to set sail. He had talked like that in his speech, but there's a high chance he's going to abandon us once things go wrong.

'Shit, noona. It's too early for you to think about running away.'

Fortunately, I didn't expect much from Lee Ji-Hye.

At this point, Cha Hee-Ra was the only person I could rely on.

I needed her to fix this situation.

"…"

"…"

- *Hahahahahaha.*

Forget it. She had already lost it, but I still had one trustworthy card remaining.

Jo Hye-Jin. My friend, Hye-Jin. She was the only one I could trust.

- No matter what… I'll make sure it doesn't happen no matter what. I'll stop it even if it means putting my life on the line. I'll stop it no matter what.

No, she didn't have to do that. Shit, there was definitely something strange here.

Just now, the atmosphere seemed hopeful, but it felt like it was plummeting into despair.

The situation was so ridiculous that I couldn't help but laugh. To make things worse, Park Deok-Gu was looking at Nice Boat proudly. This pig had to be waiting for the moment to use that boat.

Beep. Beep. Beep.!

'What the hell? What's wrong with Rafael? What's wrong? Hey, Rafael is dying. Shit. He's dying!'

I thought he was going to come back from hell. The priests who ran in late got on top of Rafael and were trying to shock his heart.

- How is it?

- I-It's not working. His heart… has stopped…

'Don't give up. Don't stop.'

- Keep pouring in holy power!

- His heart has stopped beating. He's…

- It doesn't matter! If we don't save him, we're dead. T-Turn him into an undead. Keep the life support system running! Just make sure he's breathing!

‘Please don’t give up, damn it… Don’t turn him into an undead! I can hear everything. I can hear it all.’

We were about to start, so why were they suddenly acting this way? We have to fight soon. I knew that I couldn't look solemn in front of the crowd, but I was unknowingly frowning.

Would it be better if I leave now? Shit, was I the only one who wanted to save the continent? Was that it? Shit, I couldn't run away because of the bet I had made. I didn't think this was fair, damn it. Even Dialugia looked like she was struggling.

I looked into the Telescope and heard loud voices here and there.

I couldn't help but think that everything had been ruined. I looked at Kim Hyun-Sung again, but nothing changed. He was just watching the Goddess’ Mirror from above the castle walls.

Obviously, I realized my face was still displayed on the screen. Paying a silent tribute had to end here, and I had to raise my voice like a politician and shout that it was time to fight, but my mind was blank.

‘W-What the… Is he… even planning on fighting?’

This was my first time seeing him so unmotivated, and I felt like he was thinking along the lines of, *‘Well… if the continent gets saved… then it’s saved, but if it doesn’t get saved, then there’s nothing I can do about it. It’s none of my business anyway.’*

The part I felt relieved about was that he still had his sword in his hand. At least he wouldn't avoid the fight, but it felt like he was being forced to fight. I had to say something to encourage him to save the continent.

“Please think again about the things we’ve experienced so far and the reason we've come this far. The end is near. It’s time for our efforts to bear fruits. It’s time to overcome the pain in our hearts and ring the bell of victory,” I said.

‘Hyun-Sung. Damn it, you suffered so much. It’s time to put an end to it. It was a long journey. Think about it again.’

“We may experience more pain, but we've learned how to overcome it. We learned from the past how to heal and withstand the wounds. You don’t have to be afraid.

The scars that the wounds have left will be your strength," I continued.

'Think about how much you've suffered. We've endured it well up until now. Your wounds have healed, and you've gotten stronger, right?'

"We need to reclaim our skies," I added.

'You remember what we agreed on while watching the sunset, right?'

"We must protect the place we're living in and reclaim what's ours," I said.

'You're going to watch the sunset with me, right?'

I didn't even have the chance to examine his face.

- *Hehehehe! Hehehe! Hehehehe! All of them will die! A-All of them!*

Jung Ha-Yan opened up the sky.

It would've been nice if the Outer God and the pigeon-like angels were lies. I could cook up something nice with the angels I had made if they didn't appear. Wait, perhaps I was right. I couldn't help but think along the lines of that.

Obviously, my surroundings started getting noisy. To put it nicely, the soldiers were trying to increase their will to fight, but when the sky actually opened up, I saw their faces turning serious. They started having doubts if we could even fight the demons wearing angel masks. They were afraid about facing the great and horrifying energy boring down on him.

I could tell without having to ask them.

I also felt it. I noticed something huge reaching out, and to make things worse, our secret weapon didn't even have the will to fight.

"…"

"…"

'Let's run.'

I would lose the bet, but one had to be ruthless when cutting ties. Once I believe that it was time to give up, then it would be best to give up right away. I signaled to Miss Kim Mi-Young to prepare Noah's Ark, and she nodded with a puzzled face.

"We're going to win. I'll lead," I announced.

'I'm leaving.'

"Everyone, don't worry and prepare for battle. All I see is victory and nothing else," I added.

'I'm going to throw away all the pain and restraints of this world and… '

"We have something we need to protect, so we have to show our enemies just how powerful humanity can be," I continued.

'Leave to find happiness.'

"There are no impossible fights," I said.

'This fight is impossible to win.'

"Trust me and raise your weapons. I'll be with all of you. I'll die before all of you do," I declared.

"*Ah, I'm really sorry. I really didn't know it was going to turn out like this. Ah, shit. Those pigeons are really flying out… I should hurry up and run. Ah, but what should I do about Lucifer? What was the bet even about?'*

I slowly got up from my seat while having several silly thoughts. I needed to start preparing now so that I could get the others onto Noah's Ark. I looked into the telescope, I actually saw flocks of pigeons. They definitely looked different, and it seemed like they were flying while wielding weapons, but it was ridiculous to be interested in them at this point.

'They actually came.'

I couldn't help but lampoon myself for being so greedy. How come I had just realized it? As soon as I let go of the thing I held onto tightly because I didn't want to suffer any losses, I started feeling relieved, as if I had consumed a Gaviscon.

‘Life is about coming in empty-handed and leaving empty-handed… ’

What made me so greedy that I had been working so hard up until now? I felt like I was going to have lingering attachments if I kept looking, so when I completely looked away…

Booooooooooooooooooom!!

A deafening explosion echoed, and the ground started to tremble.

Booooooooooooooooooom!!

‘Ha-Yan? Has it begun?’

It seemed that she could still remember the manual.

She instantly became the most important person on our side now that the battle had begun. We couldn't win without Kim Hyun-Sung, but there wouldn't even be a fight without Jung Ha-Yan.

It wasn't exaggerating here, and Jung Ha-Yan's role was the top priority of the continental alliance. I was proud that she was doing her best, but it was time to get Sora and leave. I was sure her mana would recover in an instant, but I wanted to tell her to stop using it and to save it since something might mess up the Noah’s Ark plan.

- Die… All of you die!

Booooooooooooooooooom!!

- S-Sora… a-are you seeing this? Are you?

Booooooooooooooooom!

“*Uh…*”

A massive gravitational field descended upon the north, bringing everything within its range down to the ground.

- *Aaaah!*

- Prepare for battle! Prepare for battleeeeeee!!!

- *Aaaaaahhhh!!!*

I felt like the cries of the allied soldiers were going to blow out my ears. They were playing the role they were given, even though we hadn't explicitly told them their roles.

Jung Ha-Yan was carrying out her role perfectly.

Boooooooooooooom!!

Jung Ha-Yan's range and power had exceeded my imagination.

Boooooooooooom!!

The entire northern region was sinking, starting from the advanced base.

It was so ridiculous that I was at a loss for words.

Boooooooooooooooom!!

The pigeons that were flying crashed into the ground and became ants that had been stepped on.

Baaaaaaaaaaaaaaaang!!!

It surprised me even after looking at them again. It didn’t affect only *some* of the important areas. It was sinking from one end of the continent to the other end like keys on the keyboards being pressed down, but the problem was that they weren’t coming back up.

Jung Ha-Yan's incredibly powerful spell rendered the pigeons' wings useless. I had heard about Jung Ha-Yan this and Jung Ha-Yan that, but my jaw still dropped to the ground when I finally saw her in action.

‘Is this even something that a human being can do?’

How could this be? Was she even a human being? How could one individual affect the entire continent…

‘No… way.’

I had no choice but to roar upon seeing Jung Ha-Yan's impact on the continent.

“Let’s protect the continent! Holy army of light!” I roared.

The crowd roared with me.

CHAPTER 699
PROTECT THE CONTINENT, HOLY ARMY OF LIGHT (2)

'Can we do it?'

"*Whoo… whoo…*"

'Can we survive?'

"Prepare for battle. Prepare for battle!"

'Can we protect it? Is it possible? Can we really win this?'

I[1] already knew that I shouldn't be having negative thoughts. I needed to believe that we'd win, that nothing would happen, and that mankind would definitely win.

However, I wonder how many people would remain steadfast in that belief after seeing the sky split open right in front of their eyes. We had heard of the day of the apocalypse and the day of the prophecy many times, and we had been preparing for it for a long time, but the strong wall of determination in my heart felt like it was crumbling down at the terrifying sight.

I was nothing but a third-rate adventurer, but I wasn't stupid. I was sure only certain people knew what was beyond that foreign light and what was coming toward us.

"An ancient demon wearing the mask of god and its angels will burn the entire continent and make all beings living on this land cry…"

I slowly turned my head when I heard that and saw my friend mumbling while spacing out. He was Kennen, the playboy of Lindel. George was next to him, and he was also known as the Third-rate Gambler. They were friends whom I fought together with during the demon army summoning incident.

"Stop saying ridiculous things, Kennen," I said.

“I just said it unknowingly. I felt like I needed to think again about what we need to fight from now on and who the enemy of mankind is. You think we’ll survive this time, too?” Kennen asked.

“…”

“…”

“It’s not about whether we’ll survive or not. It’s about protecting. Don’t forget that our families and brothers are behind us. And… and… we can endure this one as well since Father Lee Ki-Young is with us,” I replied.

“The saint of light. Goddess Benigoa’s son. The Chosen One,” he commented.

“That’s right,” I said.

“But…”

“…”

“But he’s human, too, Alex,” Kennen said.

“Kennen.”

“I know it’s not like me to say this, but I’ve been feeling many things while looking at him lately. It wouldn’t be possible for people like us. Having to save the continent that’s in danger because you’re the Chosen One… You think we’d be able to handle that pressure?

"If he were an ordinary person, I’m sure he'd already become crazy. Actually… it’s possible that he's already a madman, and he’s just doing his best to stand there because he feels responsible for all of us… Yeah, he’s just enduring it because he can’t let go…” Kennen explained.

I looked up unknowingly and saw Father Lee Ki-Young’s face.

‘The pillar of mankind… '

He was the only human being whom everyone had faith in.

‘The son of god.’

The human chosen by many gods, including Goddess Benigoa.

I couldn’t believe the playboy Kennen's words, but he was right. Father Lee Ki-Young was human as well. I couldn’t even move my body, so I was sure it was worse for him. The weight he was carrying on his back was on another level. I was responsible for my family behind me, but he was responsible for the entire continent and the soldiers on the battlefield. I wonder how I would fare if I were in his shoes.

“I would lose my mind,” I mumbled.

I was trembling even though I was telling myself that I would never get to experience what Father Lee Ki-Young had been experiencing.

Father Lee Ki-Young was fighting while carrying such heavy pressure on his back.

- Please think again about the things we’ve experienced so far and the reason we've come this far. The end is near. It’s time for our efforts to bear fruit. It’s time to overcome the pain in our hearts and ring the bell of victory.

Perhaps it was just me, but Father Lee Ki-Young looked worried to me.

- We may experience more pain, but we've learned how to overcome it. We learned from the past how to heal and withstand the wounds.

Mankind had learned how to heal and withstand the wounds, but what about him? How were his wounds? Had the painful memories that had been engraved on his body of light had enough time to heal completely?

- You don’t have to be afraid. The scars that the wounds have left will be your strength.

His speech was impactful. The fear that was eating me away was slowly disappearing. But what about him? He vanquished our fears, but who would vanquish his fears?

“Shit…”

I wasn’t the emotional type, but I kept on cursing.

“Shit…”

- We’re going to win. I’ll lead.

I wonder what it would feel like to take responsibility and lead.

- Everyone, don’t worry and prepare for battle. All I see is victory and nothing else.

What was he risking just to reassure us?

- We have something we need to protect, so we have to show our enemies just how powerful humanity can be.

It was as if Father Lee Ki-Young was saying those things to himself because he needed to be comforted. He was hypnotizing himself. I wasn’t certain, but I could feel it. It felt like he was brainwashing and reminding himself that we needed to get stronger and protect the continent.

- There are no impossible fights. Trust me and raise your weapons. I’ll be with all of you. I’ll die before all of you do.

I was sure he’d actually do that. He’d sacrifice for the humans he cherished. His eyes were the eyes of someone prepared to die. They were transparent… transparent eyes without a single lie. I wasn’t sure why, and despite knowing that he was overreacting, I couldn’t help but tear up as I stared at his face.

“Why… is this…”

I could feel the weight, pressure, sadness, and fear he was delivering. Behind his determined face that was trying to say that everything was going to be okay was a very tiny, delicate, and pitiful human being.

He stared into the distance.

The sky split open, and I saw demons wearing the mask of angels, which symbolized the end of the continent. I was scared. I could feel just how strong they were, even from far away. I heard sighs around me, and I was sure they did it unknowingly.

Those strong enough to determine the strength of our enemies were already frowning.

My hand started trembling, and I couldn't even speak properly.

"They look strong. Stronger than the demons from the demon army summoning incident… What do you, George? I know you have bad instincts… but what do you think will happen this time?" Kennen asked.

"You promised not to ask me this kind of question after I lost so much at Rift Land last time," George reminded.

"It's kind of different when the saint of light is involved. Everyone here knows that you're known as the Third-rate Gambler, George. But didn't you get it right last time? What? Do you think the Sunset Swordsman and the corrupted saint's fight—"

"Well… I'm not sure what kind of answer you want to hear from me," he interrupted.

The demons wearing the masks of angels were slowly approaching us. They looked like a hodgepodge of something I couldn't quite describe, and they picked up the pace as they rushed toward us.

They looked *different*. It was a word that was probably not suitable to describe them, but they looked like they had no emotions.

The only thing I could determine accurately was the power imbued within them. It was a power beyond the limits of humanity. They were as strong as the high-ranking adventurers. To make matters worse, there were so many of them that they had blotted out the sky.

'How can they joke around at a time like this?'

They had always been silly, so I could understand why they were doing that. I was sure they were exchanging a few remarks just to calm their anxiety. However, as the demons were getting closer, I couldn't help but listen to the Third-rate Gambler's words. Kennen was right. He did get it right last time. He had won the bet in the fight between the swordsman of light and the corrupted saint.

I looked at him, hoping he would say the words I wanted to hear.

He looked gloomy as he said, "I can tell you as many sweet words as you want, but…"

"…"

“I don’t have a good feeling about this one,” he continued.

“…”

“…”

“Prepare for battle! Prepare for battle! Archers, wait for my signal! Mages, start casting! I want all troops to be on standby. All troops on standby! No need to be nervous. Always remember that the saint of light and Goddess Benigoa is with us.”

“We can win!”

“We can win. We can do it. Comrades, I’ll see you after we’ve survived.”

“Don’t die, you bastards! Don’t die!”

“Father Lee Ki-Young will comfort our souls. Know that it’s an honor to die in the arms of the saint of the light and fight!”

“Goddess Benigoa! Please give us the strength to win.”

“For the saint of the light! For the continent!”

I heard voices everywhere.

Booooooooooooooooooom!!!

And that was when I heard a deafening explosion that shook the ground…

“W-What the hell?” I said.

I saw the pigeons falling to the ground.

“Wow… wow…!”

It was such an unrealistic sight. A mysterious gravitational field had manifested out of the blue, and it pushed every pigeon to the ground.

“Wow… Woaaah!”

The people cheered.

“It’s Goddess Benigoa! It’s her!”

No, this wasn’t holy power. I felt the flow of a huge clump of mana not too far away from where I was, and the caster was probably…

‘Jung Ha-Yan, the archmage?’

Everything I saw was being shoved into the ground. The sight was more unrealistic than I thought. Kennen started talking to George.

“Forget it, George. It was stupid of me to even ask… *Ha… haha.* Look at that. L-Look at that! *Hahahaha!!*”

“I knew it.”

“Attack… Attack! Use your spells! We have something we need to protect, so we have to show our enemies just how powerful humanity can be!”

“It’s Miss Jung Ha-Yan! It’s her spell! *Hahahaha!* It’s her!”

“Use your spells! Kill them all!”

“Die! You dirty demon bastards.”

“Don’t stop! Keep firing those arrows! Keep going!”

Booooooooom!!

Craaaaaaaaaaack!!!

Crack! Baaaaaang!!

A kaleidoscope of brilliant colors immediately inundated the battlefield. It was a sight that wouldn't allow anyone to hold in their screams, and I was no exception as I started screaming.

- Let’s protect the continent! Holy army of light!

I felt hot when I heard Father Lee Ki-Young's voice, which was so loud that it rattled my brain. It felt like the light had enveloped me. Mankind would win. Mankind would definitely win here. I truly believed that we would win.

"We're an army of light! Show the darkness what it means to invade the saint of light's continent!"

"Stop them from getting too close! Purify those dirty demon bastards!"

"Don't be deceived by their appearance! We can win! The saint of the light said that we must protect the continent! Don't back down! Make sure that they won't get on the castle walls! Keep making them crawl on the ground! Prioritize the ones that are trying to fly!"

Boooooooooooooom!!!

"The judgment of light!!"

"A blazing light towards the dirty demons!"

"For the saint of the light!"

The pigeons attempting to fly once more collapsed to the ground.

These demons were probably still under the effects of the gravitational field that had enveloped the entire northern region. It felt like our destructive power had doubled. It was a shame that some of our spells couldn't reach the enemies who were a bit too far away, but I was sure our attacks were fatal against the demons below the castle walls.

In addition…

'How is it reaching them?' The spells and arrows of the Named adventurers seemed unaffected by the gravitational field. *'Did a path open up? Did they intentionally open up a path only in that area? How is that possible?'*

It was strange to question things at this point because the archmage's spells were something I couldn't even begin to comprehend. I clenched my fist unknowingly at the thought that we could win.

I looked around, and I was sure that everyone had the same thoughts as me.

“We’re not demons, mortals.”

‘Huh?’

“It’s better to describe us as beings who came to save you.”

‘When… ’

“Don’t be afraid. Don’t be hostile toward us. We’re the light, not the darkness, and the real darkness is within all of you.”

I didn’t know when it started.

‘What the hell… When did it get here?’

A figure was standing in the middle of the soldiers on top of the castle wall. The man had long blue hair. He was an angel with large wings, but his eyes and expression were indifferent. He was so strong that everyone here seemed to be his prey.

“However, if you’re thinking about resisting.”

‘We’re going to die… We’re going to die. The soldiers here are going to die.’

“I have no choice but to fight as well.”

‘We’re going to die… all of us… ’

The man slowly raised his hand, and a strange blue light started to gather in his hand.

The blue light turned into a large scythe.

I had no idea what was going on; all I knew was that I couldn't move.

“My name is Cherubim. Resent me, mortals,” he said.

‘Is this it?’

He swung his scythe slowly, and I got scared that my head would go flying into the air.

And that was when I felt a massive wave of mana.

In slow motion, the blue-haired angel flew to the ground. I didn't know what made him fall to the ground, but a mysterious figure was blocking my eyes. Red. I saw the back of a warrior who looked like she had a red mane.

"It's you."

"…"

"It was you! *Hahahaha!* You were my opponent! *Hahahahahaha!*"

The mercenary clad in red armor started laughing as if she had lost her mind.

Then, I heard someone mumble her nickname.

"The Mercenary Queen…"

No. What had descended upon this battlefield wasn't a queen but the goddess of war.

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1. Alex's POV ☜

CHAPTER 700
I KNOW (1)

'Our Hee-Ra noona is really cool today.'

In my personal opinion, Cha Hee-Ra looked more impactful than when the awakened Kim Hyun-Sung first appeared. For a moment, I was worried if she could even arrive on time, but she arrived right on time. She prevented the allies from getting hurt and stopped Cherubim from putting a hole in the wall.

'You can have me, noona. Seriously.'

Cha Hee-Ra had to be really excited at the idea of fighting a formidable foe because she was breathing heavily like a beast.

'I take back what I just said.'

Her eyes started changing as if she wanted to fight right there and then.

She was obviously getting ready to fight. I wanted to tell her to quickly crush his head, but the problem was that I couldn't do that. The battlefield was expansive, and this war wasn't going to be a short one. The entire northern region was the battlefield.

I lifted my head and saw thousands of screens.

It was impossible to process all that information at once, even with my Mind's Eye. On top of that, I was using the Telescope, so I was gradually losing my composure. Since not every castle wall was involved in the defense, I kind of had room to breathe, but I noticed that the battlefield itself was tense.

Less than fifty percent of the region was involved in the first battle, and some of the enemy's troops were either moving from a distance or were observing the situation from afar. They knew that recklessly rushing into battle wasn't going to benefit them.

"Number 34," I said.

- O-Okay.

It was exhausting trying to control Jung Ha-Yan's mana consumption. Even if she had gained nearly infinite mana, it wasn't actually infinite. Since I had to control her mana for an extended period of time, I had to minimize her mana consumption, which was the reason I had been keeping tabs on her.

Knowing where I needed to focus more and which part I needed to loosen up was like having tens and thousands of fingers pressing thousands of keyboards at the same time. It was difficult to tell people which finger they needed to relax, and Jung Ha-Yan's control ability was just indescribable.

I tapped on my thigh, and I started getting suspicious of the demons who weren't really showing any reactions. I started feeling uncomfortable because out of all the situations I thought of, I thought this could be the worst-case scenario. I looked forward to the army of light immediately killing the dirty demons, but…

"It means they're not an easy opponent," I said.

'I thought all of them would be here.'

That was what I wanted the most. An immediate all-out war with no questions asked.

However, the scene I was seeing was completely different from what I thought.

'Why did Cherubim appear by himself?'

Where were the other Four Great Demons? It was obvious. They had thrown Cherubim here to see our reaction. Basically, it was nothing more than them testing the waters, and I was sure they didn't send him here with the intention of letting him die.

'Is it safe to assume that?'

One thing I was sure of was that these demons had a control tower as well. I couldn't help but think that there was someone observing this huge battlefield and making decisions based on the situation.

'The masked scum isn't here.'

The Outer God's force didn't have a leader in this life. I thought perhaps they had somehow revived Jin Cheong, and he decided to join them, but it was unlikely.

The masked scum was definitely dead, and it was likely that one of the Four Demons was controlling the troops.

That was why Cha Hee-Ra and Cherubim's meeting was important.

We had to collect as much data as possible.

'We can't send Hyun-Sung into the battlefield yet since the rest of them still haven't shown up. Ha-Yan is also busy at the moment.'

I couldn't take Jung Ha-Yan out until the war reached the halfway point.

'Is Rafael actually dead?'

I looked at him, and he seemed to be breathing.

'On the other side… '

- Fight for the saint of the light!

- Let's sacrifice our lives for Goddess Benigoa's son!

- Don't show your weakness to these dirty demon bastards! Don't be deceived by their looks, and don't listen to their words. Fight and keep in mind that the saint of the light is the only one we need to trust. Don't be afraid to die. The saint of the light will be with us to the afterlife!

- *Ahhhhhhhhhh!* Priest… priest!

- Surround the ones who are on the walls! Stop them from going beyond the wall! Mages, don't forget to use binding spells! Use them! Use them!

- *Heuuuuuuuung… Acccck!*

- Am I going to die… just like this?

- Father Lee Ki-Young is watching! Marouang, your life has not been in vain!

A fierce battle was already underway on one side of the battlefield, and I felt numb to the sight of demons falling to the ground.

I drank my iced coffee, and my head felt cold.

Many sad scenes were happening, but thankfully, the situation was better than what I expected. Obviously, some died, and some got injured, but it was the same for the enemy. War had always been like this.

There were parts where we could turn the table, but since the enemy hadn't used their cards, we couldn't pull out our cards first. We would have more casualties this way, but this was better rather than pulling out our cards first.

I turned to look at Cha Hee-Ra because I needed to get what I wanted before she lost reason.

“Hee-Ra noona. You know you don’t need to overdo it, right? It’s just bait…”

Booooooooooom!!!

However, the fight had already started.

I clicked my tongue at the loud explosion.

- *Hahahahaha!*

Craaaaaack!

‘Ah… shit… ’

Cha Hee-Ra started swinging her sword and axe. Cherubim erupted into a blue light. The soldiers on the castle walls started to spread out. Cha Hee-Ra remained unperturbed and grabbed Cherubim's hair.

Then, she hurled Cherubim away.

A loud noise followed afterward, and Cherubim flew into a nearby wall, collapsing it.

However, Cha Hee-Ra wasn't done just yet. She caught up to Cherubim and grabbed his head once again before sending a flurry of punches to his face.

Baaaaaaaang!!

It sounded like a bomb had just exploded.

Booooooooom!!

'Ah… this is great. At this rate, we're going to win. And I think it's a good idea if we capture him.'

Cherubim was trying to get away, but Cha Hee-Ra wouldn't let him.

He turned his head to try to avoid her attack, but her elbow landed on his chin.

Craaaaaaaaack!

'Hang in there, damn it.'

She kept punching his face as if she was hammering randomly.

If Cherubim were an ordinary person, her first punch would have ended the battle.

There were no techniques, skills, or martial arts being employed here, so one could say that this was a *dirty* fight. Still, the battle was impactful.

It was amazing that Cha Hee-Ra was dealing with the enemy in that state without losing her mind. She caught my attention more than Cherubim because she looked like the goddess of war.

I felt like I was staring at a volcano that was going to explode at any moment.

An easy victory. Everyone watching this fight was probably having similar thoughts, but I could no longer think that way because Cherubim looked like he didn't receive any damage at all.

In some ways, it looked like Jonobono's new friend was getting beat up, but Cherubim seemed laid-back.

Of course, Cha Hee-Ra seemed like she wasn't fighting with everything she had, either.

She was aware that the surroundings were still chaotic and was probably thinking about dragging him somewhere empty or telling the nearby soldiers to evacuate.

This was a huge battle, so I was convinced that the full-scale battle would start after a larger stage was secured. Of course, I wasn't planning on letting her go *that* far.

"Noona! Noona!" I called out.

- Don't interfere. You got it? Don't interfere with the fight.

Of course, I understood what she was trying to say.

"Stop fighting. I don't want you to start losing your mind so early into the war," I told her.

-…

- Who are you talking to?

- It's none of your business, bluey.

Booooooooooooom!

- You're strong.

- What?

- You're strong. To the point that it's hard to believe that you're human…

Craaaaaack!!

- What? I can't hear you.

- I can't believe…

Booooooooooom!!!

- Speak properly.

- To the point…

Craaaaaaaaaaaack!!

- What?

- To the point that I can't believe you're human.

When Cherubim finally escaped Cha Hee-Ra's grasp, he stood in the air and started talking. He looked a bit messy, and his messy hair caught my attention first.

I was relieved to see that Cha Hee-Ra had failed to pull them all out. Of course, Cherubim's face looked a bit messed up. The strange blue light enveloped his head, and his loose blue hair was soon tied neatly.

Chaa Hee-Ra noona looked at him as if she was no longer having fun, but she seemed prepared to resume the fight at any moment.

'Is he worried about his looks?'

I thought perhaps he was incapable of feeling any emotions, but it didn't seem to be the case. I wasn't sure if they were aware, but they had feelings as well. Of course, the possibility that those emotions could be interpreted based on human standards was a different story, but Jonobono's new friend didn't seem happy about getting beaten up.

Cherubim gathered the blue light once more and created a scythe while Cha Hee-Ra picked up her sword and axe.

'It'd be nice if we can get a little more information… '

We had basic information about them, but there were still many things we didn't know about them, especially Cherubim. I only had a little information about him.

Cha Hee-Ra's gaze was changing continuously with my words, but we had to get information.

"What's your reason for coming here?" I said.

- Why did you come here, bluey?

- Didn't you hear me? For salvation.

- Stop talking bullshit.

- You're a beast. Crimson beast, you want to fight even as we're talking. Someone is telling you not to fight right now.

"Ignore him, noona," I instructed.

-…

- The continent is rotten. It's collapsing due to a being that's like a lump of cancer that's working between the incompetent light and darkness. You're not mistaken, crimson-headed beast. The salvation we speak of is the safety and management of the continent. We have no other intentions aside from that. We are your saviors, and we're here to save the continent, that's all.

"You prepared a lot despite saying that you only came here to save the continent… Am I seeing things? I can clearly see the armed demons…" I said.

- It's because I knew that this was going to happen. I have no other intentions.

"How can I trust you?" I asked.

- I already told you. There's a lump of cancer among you that's eating away at the continent.

Cherubono started looking my way slowly while mumbling incomprehensible words. For some reason, I felt like our eyes met. I hated to admit it, but it felt like we had ended up in the worst-case scenario. Those bastards—they had memories of their past lives.

CHAPTER 701
I KNOW (2)

'How do they remember it? Even Benigoa and Elune have no recollection of it.'

I was just assuming things here, so nothing was certain, but I was starting to lean more on the assumption that they were starting to remember everything. This assumption was enough to establish all possibilities, including how they had come here to fight, as well as the fact that they had a control tower.

They knew Kim Hyun-Sung was a regressor, and they expected mankind to resist them the next time around.

'Does he remember everything?'

I wasn't sure about this part, but perhaps he had indirectly escaped the influence of regression because he was in the arms of the Outer God. Regardless, he had to have used all sorts of methods to retrieve his lost memories.

Obviously, this wasn't good news for mankind because the continent wasn't the only one that was trying to take advantage of the regressor.

They also had the advantage of being regressors.

Of course, when recalling how they just flew around dimensions without doing much, we seemed to have a bigger advantage, but if they expected the continent to resist even a little bit… it would be a great threat to humanity.

They were avoiding an all-out war, and some areas were in a state of lull. Their control tower had probably decided that it would be more advantageous to them that way, and I even saw some castle walls that had given up on fighting.

'What's their actual goal?'

Actually, I already knew their goal since I had seen and heard what they said.

The Outer God's forces wanted to manage the continent. They wanted to reduce the human population and stabilize the continent under their control, but all of that was just smooth talk. That was just what they were showing on the outside.

'They're demons.'

After tempting mankind with sweet words, they would suck out everything from us, and once the empty continent was no longer useful to them, they would pull the switch to end the continent.

Our lovely regressor had told me this many times before.

They were hypocritical demons that deserved to die.

- A lump of cancer?

- That's right, crimson beast. He's a lump of cancer. He's a hypocritical trash, and his very existence in this dimension makes me feel disgusted. He's a monster with no room for reformation and a hypocrite who only cares about himself. He's a traitor and a fraud who speaks sweet words to people.

- It sounds like you're speaking a bunch of nonsense to me. You're the one who invaded our home, so I don't think you're in the position of telling us what to do.

- It would be a different story if your guardian was simply at fault. We're responsible for getting rid of the bad guardian and guiding the living beings on this continent onto the right path.

- That's what you think. Who's leading who, and who's leading who onto the right path? Stop it with the bullshit. Who gave you that responsibility in the first place?

- Think about the bigger picture, crimson beast.

- What?

- The continent is dying. Humans kill each other…

- I already know what you're trying to say, so if you're going to talk about some philosophical bullshit, come down here, you bastard. I don't have time for this.

‘No, noona. Let’s hear him out a little more. Calm down.’

- You’re all eating away at yourself. You have always ruined everything. History tells us that. You've rejected and destroyed the laws of nature to ultimately devour everything. You rely on useless desires to climb to a higher position. You pretend to be able to reject your instincts, but in the end, you can’t do it. It’s the same for the continent. Think about the races and creatures that have become extinct because of mankind. You’re extremely selfish, and your race is scary, even in our eyes.

- Stop acting like you’re in some kind of documentary. I’m not interested.

- It’s not that we dislike humans, crimson beast. We actually love humans.

“Noona, let’s keep listening. You’ve calmed down anyway,” I suggested.

-…

- Like I said, we love humans and admire the human race. They’re true to their desires, ugly, and unable to resist their instincts, but we can’t help but love them. Look at yourself, crimson beast. The strength that you possess—the power you've obtained. It is a perfect showcase of humanity's potential. The gravitational field capable of crushing us and the magical gift you call magic. That’s the power that humans possess. We just want humanity's light to last even a tad bit longer. We want all living things on this land to live a more prosperous and balanced life. Humans must live that way.

- We’ve been living that way already.

- It may seem like that on the outside, but can you guarantee it’ll be the same a few hundred years from now or even a few decades from now? It's probably too soon for you to think about, but those who manage you aren’t safe either. They’re unstable as well and are getting swayed by their emotions. Darkness is always targeting them, and light cannot protect them from it. There isn’t a more competent guardian than us.

-…

- Your current guardian isn’t qualified, nor do they have the ability to protect you. They merely think of you as ways to make money, and they cannot empathize with the pain each and every one of you feels.

- Stop talking crap. Can’t you see who started the fight?

- We’re reasonable. The sacrifice of a few for the absolute majority is inevitable, and it happens all the time. I understand your desire to criticize us, but so what? Humans have always been like that. Isn’t this more reasonable than being inconsistent?

-…

- Withdraw your troops. We don’t want to make meaningless sacrifices, too. We use our swords to protect ourselves, not to harm you. We’re not wearing demonic masks. We’re your new guardians and saviors.

‘What the hell is this bastard talking about?’

I started having questions as I continued listening to their conversation.

‘Is he speaking the truth?’

According to Mind’s Eye, his nature was a benevolent revolutionary.

He wasn’t wrong. The light of the continent was incompetent, and the darkness was targeting this place. This only applied to some, but there were people and gods like Elune who had used their followers to make a profit.

Looking at the bigger picture, Cherubim’s thoughts were flawless. Right now, mankind seemed united, but what about after this was over? What would mankind choose to do once our common enemy was gone? I was sure that it wouldn't be a positive decision.

'Doesn't he want to use this place as a holy power farm?'

What was he really after? His goal wasn’t to control the popular and breed humans. He was actually acting like a true guardian. He thought about the potential that was hidden behind the negative qualities of humanity and wanted to develop that potential.

He wanted to drive out the incompetent guardian and provide an environment where humans could grow in a stable direction. It did sound sweet.

Perhaps there wouldn't be any starving people anymore. No more wars and

arguments, and everyone would be able to focus on what they wanted to do. Perhaps they wanted to establish that kind of utopia. Humans would be able to take a leap forward in a new direction while endlessly exploring and discovering the potential within us.

It was to the point that I couldn't understand why Kim Hyun-Sung and some of the people had ended up resisting these guys. If they weren't lying, then I would have to admit that I was wrong. If they really wanted to use this continent as a sacred farm, they wouldn't have tried to kill a ton of humans. There wouldn't have been constant fighting, and the continent could have survived.

Of course, there were other possibilities.

'He might just be lying.'

If he had a vested interest in making us believe him, then there was a high chance that he was just lying by telling us sweet words when his true goal was the collapse of the continent and creating a holy power farm.

He didn't look like he was lying, but I couldn't really say for sure.

'Should we try provoking him a bit?'

It was kind of dangerous, but I didn't think that it would hurt. I wasn't sure why he was talking so much, but it was probably because he had acknowledged Cha Hee-Ra as an equal. She had to have left a good impression on him.

I spoke cautiously, and Cha Hee-Ra seemed like she was questioning what I said. She looked as if she was questioning how I knew this and why I was telling her to say this, but in the end, she spoke what I wanted her to say.

- You guys already failed once, right?

-…

- You guys failed. Isn't that right?

-…

- You speak sweet words, but in the end, your goals are different…

- We're not the ones who failed.

- What?

- We didn't fail. I-It's because of that dirty lump of cancer. It's because of that bastard.

'What the hell? What's wrong with her face? Control your emotions.'

- Trusting that disgusting bastard was my mistake. We fought a fight we didn't need to and killed the humans who should've lived on the continent with our own hands. All because of that bastard. We failed because of him!

'Hey, what's wrong? You're out of character… stay in character.'

- His lying tongue deceived us, so we didn't fail! Everything should've gone as planned. Everyone would have lived, and the continent would have been prosperous. Nature would have pervaded the continent, and there would have been an abundant amount of mana in the air. Worries and anguish would have disappeared, and all living beings on the continent would have enjoyed what they had deserved.

'Shit, I had no idea that you have such a bad temper… '

- What replaced joy was a life full of pain and screams, and what replaced nature was the plagues and the undead. Humans killed each other constantly, and conflict grew to the point that it could no longer be resolved.

'Hey… don't cry. Why are you crying? Those are fake tears, right? Tell me that I'm right.'

- We tried to turn everything around, but it was already too late. My brothers perished along with the humans he cherished on the stage that scum had prepared. That lump of cancer isn't on anyone's side. That disgusting trash… that trash ruined everything! His false compliments, lying face, tongue, and behavior! He doomed the continent! Everything went to shit because of him, so we didn't fail! That ending…

-…

- That ending wasn't what we wanted. In the end… it wasn't what we wanted to see. I still remember it.

-…

- I still remember… this desolate place devoid of anything.

'Hey, you talking like that makes it seem like you're on the side of justice… Why are you doing this?'

- I'll make sure that doesn't happen this time. Even if I die, I'll make sure that we don't see the same ending. I'll make sure this continent doesn't fall into the hands of that lump of cancer. I know it hurts, and it's painful, but we have no choice but to fight.

'Stop talking nonsense. Shit. Just speak the truth.'

- For the prosperity of the continent.

'What the… shit. Was this bastard speaking the truth?'

I couldn't believe it, but his acting was top-notch. If his words were true… then it was possible that the truth that I knew wasn't the truth.

'Is he really not lying?'

He stood between the continent and the Outer God, and then he made them fight?

'No way… That can't be… '

It seemed that he was dissatisfied with just creating chaos and conflict, so he filled the continent with plagues and the undead.

'This is… '

It was him… So he was the one who had created the crimson scenery that Kim Hyun-Sung saw?

I knew he was a piece of trash, and I knew that he was an irredeemable villain, but…

"Just how messed up were you, Jin Cheong?"

His evil deeds had exceeded my expectations.



PDF by: traitorAIZEN